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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2018, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

9 **Correspondence Following Committee Meeting** (Pages 3 - 16)

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My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence



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Neuadd y Sir
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Date: 21 September 2018

Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall,
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Chris,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 September 2018

On behalf of the Members, thank you for attending the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, to discuss the Council's Budget Strategy for 2019/20. Would you please also pass Members' thanks to the officers in attendance, particularly to Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Clare Marchant, Director of Social Services, for enabling us to focus on the budget challenges faced by Social Services. Following the scrutiny, Members agreed that I pass on the following observations captured during the Way Forward for your consideration.

The Committee considers it important that Scrutiny Members play an active part in scrutinising proposed changes to the budget, to ensure the Council has the finances in place to continue to deliver sustainable local services, particularly in demand-led areas such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services. Therefore focussing on Social Services, whose allocation of the Council's total controllable budget is significant, was a good opportunity to provide Members with a fuller understanding of the financial resilience work underway to tackle the challenges the Directorate is facing.

Members found it useful to consider Social Services financial challenges within the context of the Corporate Budget Strategy for 2019/20. We note your decisions relating to the Strategic Budget Reserve, set aside to balance the books over the next 3 years, that Council reserves are reviewed six monthly, and that the use of

£3.75m of reserves over the next three years, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, will be replenished if necessary. We also note that capital debt has not increased, and that Council Tax will increase, however there is no certainty about the final proposal and that Council Tax may well be set at a higher level than that illustrated.

The Committee understands that, for Adult Services, the management of demand for services is critical, and preventative services make a significant impact on budgetary control. We were interested to hear that 196 fewer service users would save the Council £2.5m, and note that the cost of domiciliary care is higher in Cardiff than in other areas of Wales. Therefore, we concur with you that focus on prevention is crucial, we acknowledge the importance of understanding what is going wrong in people's lives, and that there is more work to do on demand management. Members endorse an invest-to-save approach to developing preventative services where it can be financially justified.

The Committee noted that demand in Children's Services is rising rapidly, and intervention is required at the earliest possible stage. Members consider that the Council's position as the Local Authority across Wales with the lowest percentage of foster placements 'in-house' is concerning. We note from your presentation the substantially greater cost of private sector independent fostering agencies, and are concerned that the Council has historically adopted this model of service provision. We were therefore pleased to hear that you aspire to move away from this model.

Focussing on budget setting for Social Services, Members are keen to see you avoid a scenario whereby the service is already overspending its budget at Quarter 1 and potentially at the year-end, by several million pounds. We therefore urge you to put in place a process that avoids such overspending.

We are reassured at fresh attempts to find lower cost care alternatives, particularly for our cared for children, but until substantial progress in reducing costs is made, we recommend that forecasting of expenditure takes account of the trend line illustrated which shows how spending levels have risen and are predicted to rise. Whilst increasing trends mean increasing budgets, we feel some invest-to-save improvements are required. Importantly, we recognise the need to deliver on savings identified, but also consider that prevention is central to resolving budget challenges.

We were interested in your reference to the variation in judiciary court outcomes across Wales, noting your example of Newport Council who appear to be bucking the trend for increasing numbers of court orders. We therefore urge you to reflect on whether the Authority needs to raise this matter as an issue with the courts.

We are encouraged that the Council is seeking new ways of working with health colleagues to improve hospital discharge, and we look forward to the impact new approaches may have on the Social Services budget around April 2019.

Finally, we were reassured to hear that the Corporate Director People and Communities considers excellent performance management is crucial, and the key to delivering the service within the budget set. We would be interested to see the detailed plan for delivering that performance improvement process when it is finalised.

To recap, the Committee:

- Concurs that focus on prevention is crucial, and there is more work to do on demand management.
- Endorses an invest-to-save approach to developing preventative services where it can be clearly justified.
- Supports a move away from the current model placing children out of county.
- Considers that those children currently placed out of county must retain security arrangements.
- Urges a process that avoids overspending by the taking account of the increasing trends when forecasting budgetary expenditure.
- Recognises the new ideas and initiatives set in train by the new management team and proposals to reduce costs across the board.
- Urges you to reflect on whether the Authority needs to investigate further the consistency of court orders in Wales.
- Looks forward to the impact new ways of working with health partners may have on the Social Services budget around April 2019.
- Looks forward to hearing in detail how the proposed and recommended changes and improvements in performance management impact on the cost

and efficiency of the service area and improve its service offering to its customers.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee for consideration of the challenges of the Budget Strategy for 2019/20. There is just one request for additional information in our letter, and I would not therefore expect a full response. I have copied in the Chairs of the Community and Adult Services, and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees, whose Terms of Reference focus on Social Services.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Lee Bridgeman, Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Mary McGarry, Chair, Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance
Clare Marchant, Director of Social Services
Alison Jones, Principal Scrutiny Officer, CASSC
Martyn Hutchings, Principal Scrutiny Officer, CYP
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer.

CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE
Fy Nghyf/ My Ref: CM40360

Dyddiad / Date: 25th October 2018

Councillor David Walker
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
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CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

Annwyl/Dear
Councillor
Walker

PRAP Scrutiny
Committee -
12th
September
2018 - Budget
Strategy

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Thank you for your letter dated 21st September 2018 and the useful comments raised. I would like to thank the Committee for the support expressed for the demand management and early intervention initiatives explored at the meeting.

Further to the interest expressed in detailed plans for performance improvement, the Corporate Director for People and Communities and the Director of Social Services have confirmed that they will provide a future update to the Committee on the progress being made in this regard. They have advised that following the recent conclusion of a consultation process with staff and trade unions, performance support resources and practices will now be brought together across the directorate. In addition, and following work by the performance panel

of the CYP scrutiny committee, a performance-reporting format for Children Services has now been agreed. It is planned that the roll out of directorate wide core data reporting will commence in the fourth quarter of 2018/19 and the Committee may therefore wish to consider a report back in the first quarter of 2019/20.

It is recognised that Children' Services are continuing to experience considerable pressures. The Council has provided significant levels of additional funding to the area in recent years with a net increase to the budget of £5.8 million (1 1.86%) in 2018/19. Funding for Children's Services will continue to be a priority for the Cabinet. However, specific decisions on funding must be taken as part of

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Glanfa'r Iwerydd / Atlantic Wharf , Caerdydd/Cardiff, CFIO 4UW

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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the overall Council budget, having regard to available resources and the full range of spending commitments.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process.

Yn gywir

Yours sincerely

Councillor I Y Cynghorydd Chris Weaver
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance
Aelod Cabnet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad

Date: 17 September 2018

Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member
Cardiff Council,
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Dear Councillor Weaver,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 September 2018

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee thank you for attending Committee to facilitate scrutiny of the Council's progress in tackling Sickness Absence. Members would be grateful if you would pass on our appreciation to Philip Lenz and his team for the significant preparation that went into this scrutiny. We offer the following comments and observations for you to reflect on as you continue to review and refine the Cabinet's approach.

The Committee was pleased to hear of the many new initiatives in tackling sickness absence since our previous scrutiny in January 2018. Members particularly noted the signposting to Council well-being services by GP surgeries, the flu vaccine programme targeting frontline employees, and the physiotherapy massage sessions made available in the workplace. All these appear to have contributed to an improved end of year forecast of 10.15 FTE days lost at quarter one, indicating that absence levels are expected to fall when compared with the last two years. The forecast indicates sickness absence may fall below the Wales average for 2017/18 of 10.4 FTE days lost per employee, but fail to achieve the Council's 9.5-day target.

Schools – Governing Bodies

Several Members reflected on their experience of sitting on governing bodies and the notable improvement in the sickness absence information provided to schools, which now enables governors to benchmark their own schools performance against other schools in Cardiff. We congratulate you on this work, acknowledging that you now ensure the report is sent both to the Head Teacher and to the Chair of Governors

simultaneously. This ensures governing bodies are empowered to tackle sickness absence proactively, and we urge you to take a further step of strongly recommending to schools that sickness absence becomes a standing item on all Governing Body agendas.

Schools – Consistency

You stated that you were not aware of under-reporting of sickness absence in schools, although it was mentioned in the APSE report; however, you consider there is still a return to work interview compliance issue. We understand there is some difficulty in establishing the quality of application of the sickness policy, however feel it is important that you monitor uniformity of policy adoption, and therefore we would urge you to continue development work in this area.

Benchmarking

It is the Committee's view that the challenge of bringing sickness absence below 10 days will require closer analysis of the policies of other organisations. We continue to be interested in benchmarking with other Councils. Having identified Merthyr Tydfil Council's sickness levels are considerably lower than Cardiff's and encouraged you to explore further, we remain keen to hear more of the best practice your officers unearthed in recent discussion with Merthyr's HR team. When we next examine progress of reducing sickness absence levels we will be looking for a more detailed comparison. We urge you similarly to explore the success of Glasgow Council in tackling sickness absence.

Good Practice

The Committee highlighted the practice of 'social prescribing' as a good initiative used by organisations such as United Welsh Housing and embraced by the GP service. You agreed to follow up this initiative, and we look forward to hearing how it might fit within the Council's approach to improving sickness absence when we review progress.

We note the majority of days lost through absence are caused by stress and muscular-skeletal/back reasons, and we consider there is value in the Council recording 'work related' back and muscular-skeletal sickness figures separately.

Culture

The Committee considers that culture plays a significant part in tackling sickness absence, and notes that there are some services, such as Education, that are skewed by the results of one part of the service. We refer to your example of the schools catering service with high levels of part-time staff and significant absence levels. We endorse your initiative in creating a bespoke action plan for this service, adapting reporting arrangements to ensure compliance with the policy. We feel it would be useful to see the data for Education presented without the catering service. We expect such bespoke action plans to be introduced in other service areas where one part of it shows particularly high absence rates. This should include Waste Management and parts of Social Services.

Members are also interested in how the Council can tackle high levels of sickness absence in service areas that hold vacant posts, either for budgeting reasons or because there is a difficulty filling posts. We note you have additional Health & Safety Officers that will be undertaking more work on this specific issue and more information will emerge over the next 6 months. We will therefore uphold this line of inquiry in our next scrutiny.

Finally, there are a number of action points for you to follow up in this letter, and the Committee is keen to ensure that its comments and suggestions are explored by the HR service. Therefore, we will be looking for a response on all matters we have raised in this letter.

To recap, the Committee:

- Recommends you strongly recommend to schools that sickness absence becomes a standing item on all Governing Body agendas.
- Urges you to continue development work on monitoring schools' uniformity of sickness absence policy application.
- Requests a more detailed comparison of best practice in Merthyr Tydfil and Glasgow Councils when it next monitors sickness absence.
- Urges you to explore the practice of *social prescribing* as a good initiative used by organisations such as United Welsh Housing.
- Considers there is value in the Council recording '*work related*' back and muscular-skeletal sickness absence figures.

- Considers it would be useful to see the data for Education presented without the catering service
- Will continue its interest in the sickness absence figures for service areas that hold vacant posts, and looks forward to more health and safety information informing sickness reporting over the next 6 months.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, my sincere thanks for attending the PRAP Scrutiny Committee for consideration of Sickness Absence. I would be grateful if you would consider our views as you continue your work to reverse the sickness absence trend of the last two years, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Christine Salter, Corporate Director, Resources
Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer
Anita Batten, HR People Partner
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y
CABINET
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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM40317

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Dyddiad / Date: 22nd October 2018

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Councillor David Walker

Cardiff County Council

Atlantic Wharf

Cardiff

CFIO 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Councillor Walker

Prap Scrutiny Committee - 12th September

Thank you for your letter dated 1 7th September 2018.

1. Recommends you strongly recommend to schools that sickness absence becomes a standing item on all Governing Body agendas.

This was raised as an agenda item at Chair of Governors meeting on the 16th October. In addition to sending the quarterly benchmarked data reports to the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of each school, a communication will also be sent to the school Clerks to Governors circulation list requesting that they ensure the item is included on the governing body agenda. Finally, the benchmarked data communication to Chairs of Governors and Headteachers includes the following statement:

'As personal data is not included, please share the benchmarked data report with your governing body for information and discussion at its next meeting.'

From Q2 reports this message will be moved to a more prominent position.

2. Urges you to continue development work on monitoring schools' uniformity of sickness absence policy application.

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

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HR Officers continue working with schools to ensure sickness is captured and reported on HR system.

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3. Requests a more detailed comparison of best practice in Merthyr Tydfil and Glasgow Councils when it next monitors sickness absence.

Further work will be done to develop a detailed comparison of practice in Merthyr Council following recent visit and we will investigate sickness absence management in Glasgow Council.

4. Urges you to explore the practice of social prescribing as a good initiative used by organisations such as United Welsh Housing.

I have asked officers to follow-up on the practice of social prescribing and make contact with United Welsh Housing in relation to this initiative.

5. Considers there is value in the Council recording 'work related' back and muscular-skeletal sickness absence figures.

Currently we report work related back and muscular skeletal sickness absences which relate to Occupational Ill Health or Industrial Injury, the latter having a direct link to work. APSE have indicated that there is a direct link between high levels of absence in roles such as refuse workers and homecarers and their working practices and advocate preventative measures such as those mentioned at the Scrutiny meeting e.g. early referral to physiotherapy. I am not clear as to the value of this suggestion and the extra work it will mean for officers and will discuss it further with the Council's Health & Safety manager.

6. Considers it would be useful to see the data for Education presented without the catering service

As mentioned at the meeting, the Education Directorate have identified this as an area of focus and an action plan for the catering service has been developed. Attached at Appendix 1 is that sickness absence data for the central Education Service with the breakdown of the catering service sickness absence data for 2017/18 and for Quarter 1 2018/19.

7. Will continue its interest in the sickness absence figures for service areas that hold vacant posts, and looks forward to more health and safety information informing sickness reporting over the next 6 months.

I note your interest in sickness absence figures for areas which hold vacancies and we can explore this further. As mentioned at the meeting Health & Safety colleagues are reviewing stress risk assessments across Directorates and this will be used to inform prevention interventions and support for staff in reducing stress in the workplace.

Yn gywir

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Weaver', written in a cursive style.

Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Chris Weaver

Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

Aelod Cabnet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad

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