

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Bowen-Thomson, Boyle, Cunnah, Hudson, Lister,
Mackie and Murphy

17 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

18 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members had a responsibility under Article 16 of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interests and complete Personal Interest Forms at the commencement of the agenda item in question.

19 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 11 July 2018 were approved as a correct record.

20 : SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Chairperson welcomed:

- Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation and Performance;
- Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer;
- Anita Batten, Operational Manager, HR People Partner;
- Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources

The Committee was advised that a short scrutiny of the Council's approach to tackling sickness absence levels would be undertaken. The Committee were continuing their interest in monitoring improvement by focussing on current levels, targets and action plans.

The Chairperson invited Cabinet Member Chris Weaver to make a statement.

The Committee was advised that improvement issues were being addressed and work was on going, with an internal review involving APSE, who had suggested 16 Recommendations, going forward with an Action Plan. For Quarter 1 there were signs of an improvement in sickness absence compared with last year. Therefore the projected sickness figures were lower for 2018/19 and, and the Action Plan would support the health and wellbeing of staff going forward.

The Chairperson invited Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer to give a presentation on the Sickness Absence Review, which outlined the following:

- Cardiff Council Sickness FTE days lost per person
- All Wales data on Sickness

- 2017/18 data from Core Cities
- 38.80% of the workforce had no sickness
- Proportion of total sickness recorded by reason for absence 2017/18
- FTE days lost by reason, vast majority Stress (non-work) and muscular-skeletal
- Mental Health information by Directorates
- Diagnosis as per the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
- Information via Grade on days lost
- Cases reaching different stages and dismissal
- Sickness Absence Review 2017/18
- APSE Review Recap
- Action Plan Progress
- Policy Review
- Supporting Managers
- Schools – Ranges of FTE days lost for schools in each sector
- Early Intervention
- Occupational Health Waiting Times
- Health & Wellbeing Initiatives
- Influenza by Quarter
- Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

The Committee was advised that as a preventative measure, Council front line staff would be offered the flu vaccination through a voucher scheme and this would commence in the Autumn.

Member she heard the Council had achieved the Silver Corporate Health Standard and were now in a position to go for Gold.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee drew attention to the data provided on Sickness levels of Core Cities and noted that Cardiff was located at the bottom. Further, when Sickness Absence was considered by the Committee in January 2018 a recommendation was that officers look at the Merthyr Council sickness absence policy, along with best practice measures at other similar council's and report back.

The Officers explained that Cardiff was working with APSE and looking at working practices at similar local authorities and there were recommendations in the report that were in line with good practice. Unfortunately, officers were unable to visit Merthyr Council as a result of bad weather, but had re-arranged to visit the Council that week.

The Committee drew attention to the APSE recommendations and it was recognised that other local authorities had developed alternative working practices to address sickness absence. The Committee suggested that Officers look at the Merthyr model, which was at 6.8 FTE days lost, as there were examples out there with days lost under that of 9 FTE.

The Committee drew attention to Return to Work (RTW) interviews in schools as it was possible not all sickness absence was reported, and the correct processes were not being followed.

Members of the Committee were provided with an update on the current position with schools and officers were not aware of non-reporting issues.

The Committee discussed the sickness absence days lost through muscular-skeletal and asked how much were work related.

It was explained to the Committee that work related back problems were not formally recorded. The Occupational Health officers would recommend a risk assessment and this was being piloted at Lamby Way.

The Committee asked about the reporting mechanisms of sickness and if an employee was sent home, would that first or half day be reported as sickness.

Members of the Committee asked for information on automatic referrals to occupational health, the extent that managers assess the employee, and if it was compulsory for an employee to attend a referral..

The Committee was informed of the referral process in place, which in most cases did not refer to broken bones. Managers would agree a referral to Occupational Health, supported by HR. There was an obligation for the employee to attend the referral..

The Committee asked for information on schools policies for Return to Work interviews.

Members were advised that where a school adopts the Council's sickness absence policy the Governing Body should ensure it is adhered to. The Council was not aware of any Governing Body that was consulting on alternative policies. A school could develop its own policy but that would need full consultation with Trade Unions.

Members of the Committee asked if there was scope for sharing information on school's with wider Governing Bodies, with consultation decisions sent to Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies.

The Committee asked about the increase in non-work related stress matters and if an analysis had been undertaken to understand if these issues were caused through work related factors.

The Committee was advised that as part of Quarter 1 reporting a forecast of 10.5 FTE was projected. Areas of Social Services were experiencing work related stress, and risk assessments were in place to support this. A new Health & Safety Officer was also in place and would pick up these issues. An update would be provided in 6 months.

The Committee discussed wellbeing practices in the community that involved GP Clusters with staff engaging in social activities. Channel View Leisure Centre offered discounted services to employees. The Committee was advised that the Council had engaged with Cardiff North and West Clusters. .

The Committee highlighted the practice of 'social prescribing' as a good initiative used by organisations such as United Welsh Housing. Funding was also in place for a flu vaccination pilot scheme for front line staff.

The Committee drew attention to the level of sickness absence in Education, which was reported 6 months ago. The culture was apparent across all levels in Education and it was essential that Directors deal with under performance as, a result of absenteeism.

Members of the Committee were advised the issues in Education mainly related to catering, a large section of the workforce, which included part-time staff. This was included in the Action Plan and the reporting arrangements were also being addressed and were included on the weekly management team agenda.

The Committee was informed that seasonal change was not recorded as part of the sickness absence process.

The Committee was advised of the fast tracking system in place when referring employees to in-house occupational health.

The Committee noted the rise in Sickness Absence in the last 3 years.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

21 : BUDGET STRATEGY 2019/20

The Chairperson welcomed:

- Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance;
- Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources;
- Ian Allwood, Head of Financial Services
- Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
- Clare Marchant, Director Adult Services

The Chair explained this was an opportunity for the Committee to consider the Council's Budget Strategy for 2019/20 in the context of what it means for a Directorate facing twin pressures of increasing demand due to changing demographics and increasing costs of care at a time of shrinking budgets. The Committee would focus specifically on the challenges faced and the financial resilience planning underway as part of the strategy in the Council's Adult Social Services Directorate.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Weaver to make a statement.

Councillor Weaver explained that the strategy to address the budget gap of £34.2m in 2019/20 was framed around four assumptions:

1. Council Tax Increase of 4.3% generating £5,785m

2. Cap on schools growth generating £2,796m
3. Use of earmarked reserves generating £1,5m
4. Savings required of £24,117m

The Committee received a presentation which outlined the following:

- Planning Context for the Council. The Shape of the Council's 2018/19 Budget of £609m
- Budget Strategy Gap (£91.4m to 21/22, £34.2m 19/20)
 - Use of Reserves
 - Savings
 - Cap on Schools Growth
 - Council Tax

- Risks and Financial Resilience

The Chairperson invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee was advised that the Council had earmarked reserves. A Strategic Budget Reserve had been created from surplus monies which could be drawn down if necessary. This had proved fit for purpose, and a plan would be developed to replenish this.

The Committee was assured at this point the information in the report was an assumption, which may change, but a Council Tax increase of some scale was expected.

Members of the Committee drew attention to the level of reserves held by schools and the impact of a 1% cap on schools budgets.

The Committee was informed that the cap had been in place for a few years, however, the school would bear the element of the cap. Welsh Government had given additional monies back to schools for maintenance in 2017/18 and balances had been inflated. Different schools had different challenges, which were continually under discussion.

The Committee discussed the growth pressures along with the delegated schools budgets. The pay award was addressed including the monies allocated to schools and the previous monies allocated to schools.

The Chairman invited Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Clare Marchant, Director of Social Services to give a presentation, which outlined the following:

- Delivering service improvement and financial sustainability
- Adult Services Budget History
- Adult Social Services: Where we spend the money
- Key Challenges – Demographic Growth
- Key Challenges – Increasing Costs
- Adult Social Services – How do we respond to these pressures
- Adult Services – Prevention Managing Demand

- Adult Services – The Impact
- Children’s Services Budget History
- Children’s Social Services – Where the money was spent
- Children’s Services – Demand and cost pressures
- New Model
- Support for Families
- Children’s Services – Signs of Safety (Remodelling Children’s Services)
- Children Services – Demand and cost pressures
- Child Placements Project: Fostering Review
- Child Placements – Residential
- Child Placements Project – Residential Cardiff

The Chairperson thanked officers for the presentation and invited the Committee to ask questions.

The Committee was concerned with the lack of budget planning in Social Services, given that there were overspend at the outset of budget monitoring.

The Committee was informed that a significant number of Looked After Children were being supported through the system; this could be a current trend or could continue for a period.

The Committee drew attention to how the judiciary in Cardiff dealt with Child Protection cases compared with the rest of Wales.

Members were advised of the judiciary process in Cardiff, which operated differently to that of Newport, with the Local Forum Justice Board and how this impacted on Cardiff.

The Committee heard about the statutory resources in place to support both Children’s Services and Adult Services, which were mainly driven by safety measures. It was essential to practice the right model looking at risk and intervention.

The Committee heard that demand in Children’s Services is rising rapidly, and intervention is required at the earliest possible stage. The Council’s has the lowest percentage of foster placements ‘in-house’ across Wales. Private sector independent fostering agencies are currently used to provide this service.

The Committee noted the current budget pressures would still lead to over spends in the Directorate. More pressures were also being realised and focus was being directed towards prevention. The next financial year would also be difficult, with further potential impacts on the budget however excellent performance management would be the key to delivering the service within the budget set.

Demand for delayed transfers of care was increasing and resources were being put in place to support this. The Council is therefore seeking new ways of working with health colleagues to improve hospital discharge.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their thoughts and observations.

22 : WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee considered their 2018/19 planned programme of work.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED:

- i. The Draft Work Programme at Appendix 2 becomes the outline work programme for the Committee, notwithstanding matters that arise throughout the year that are unknown to the Committee at this point in time.
- ii. Noted that the work programme would be updated on a quarterly basis.
- iii. The continuation of a Performance Panel and membership.

The Chair circulates the final Work Programme for 2018/19 to all Committee Members and stakeholders.

23 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 3 OCTOBER 2018 AT 4:30PM