

JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 JUNE 2019

Present: Councillor (Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Bridgeman, Carol Cobert, Rebecca Crump,
Karen Dell'Armi, Gibson, Jenkins, Joyce, McGarry, Naughton
and Singh

1 : CHAIRPERSON

Councillor Lee Bridgeman was nominated and seconded as Chairperson for the meeting.

2 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Goddard, Taylor, Phillips and Lent.

Apologies were also received from Patricia Arlotte.

3 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

4 : PREVENTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG DEALING - CABINET RESPONSE

Members were advised that the Joint Committee presented its Inquiry report into Preventing Young People's Involvement in Drug Dealing to Cabinet on 15 November 2018, a full response to the report was approved by Cabinet on 18 April 2019.

The Inquiry report included 19 recommendations for the Cabinet to respond to. The Cabinet response stated that six recommendations were partially accepted and 12 fully accepted and one to follow (17).

A copy of the report and response were attached to the report.

Members noted the positive response provided by Cabinet.

RESOLVED: to accept the report and request a full action plan implementing the recommendation early in the autumn.

5 : LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Members were advised that this meeting was being held to enable Members to scrutinise the draft Local Authority Social Services Annual Report, which should give a clear view of the effectiveness of the Council's Social Care Services. The Report would be considered by Cabinet on the 11 July 2019.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member, Social Care, Health and Wellbeing); Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children and Families); Claire Marchant (Director of Social Services) and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director – Children’s Services)

The Chairperson advised Members that the questioning would be split into three sections, firstly the Overall report, then Children’s services and finally Adult Services.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make statement in which she said that this was her sixth time at Committee presenting this report; the report was a transparent and honest analysis of the significant progress made to date as well as outlining the challenges in delivering social services in the backdrop of austerity, an increasing population and increasing needs and demands for care and support. She added that Committee would be aware of the import that Cabinet places in supporting vulnerable people.

The Cabinet Member referred to the positive range of innovative responses made in challenges times and made particular reference to the preventative agenda and the Independent Living Services and First point of Contact – noting that the CIW reflects the person centred approach and are pleased with the preventative work being done. Reference was also made to the Integrated Dementia Day Service at Grand Avenue and the work with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, reflected in the positive atmosphere and level of care that strikes visitors there. Finally the Cabinet Member wished to pay tribute to the workforce and thank them for their dedication and compassion.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Hinchey to make a statement in which he said that it was refreshing to see the work that has been done, with great support from colleagues across the whole Council, Scrutiny and Cabinet. He added that the priorities in the Corporate Plan reflect what the Council wants to exceed at. Reference was made to the delivery of the new model for early family health and support network which has undergone a soft launch. He noted that the Council was now into its third year of the adolescent resource centre and he was very proud of the achievements made there. He noted that there was now a lower number of children coming back out of the system and there was a commitment to reunification with family where appropriate. The Cabinet Member wished to made particular reference to Crosslands and the exemplary CIW report it had received and reiterated his thanks to the workforce who were dedicated and had embraced change. Finally he wished to thanks the Director and Assistant Directors for their honesty and noted that things cannot change quickly but if the outcomes are met correctly then change will follow.

The Chairperson invited Claire Marchant to outline the presentation summarising the Draft Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2018-19; after which he invited questions and comments from Committee Members;

Overall Report

Members considered the report to be very comprehensive and clear but lengthy, especially the Directors introduction and considered that it duplicated some of the information in the report itself and could be summarised. The Director accepted this and explained that it is a prescribed template but that she wanted to include her overall judgement on performance too.

Members asked if there would be a user friendly version available to the public and were advised that there would be.

Children's Services

Members referred to Radicalisation and vulnerable people and asked for more information on this. The Director stated that it is underpinned by the Vulnerable people agenda in Safeguarding, including young people and Adults with disabilities/learning disabilities. The Council was taking a joined up approach with partners across the Council and with Police; Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the Local Safeguarding group for Cardiff alongside Community Safety Partnership. Operationally, they would build on what was working well with the multi-agency approach rather than developing new ways of working around each issue.

Members noted the Survey results and that there was no comparative data to previous years; Members considered the past 5 years data would be useful in the report to see trends and direction. The Director said this could be included in the final version of the report.

Members were surprised that in the age group 18+ there was only a 5% response rate and asked what could be done to increase this. The Director advised that there was Integrated Care Fund support to develop support for young carers across the City, the service was hoping to engage more with young people and hoped to see an increase in the response rate next year.

The Director was asked about attendance of Children Looked After in secondary school and the fact that it has decreased compared to the last 2 years. The Director stated that they would be working with Education and Head Teachers around attainment and attendance, there was work already going on around this issue. The Director added that there were a number of children being educated outside of the school setting and there was a need to drill down on this and this would be a priority for this year.

Members noted the percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care was much worse than 2 years ago and asked what was being done to reverse this trend. The Assistant Director explained that they had transferred the service to the Into Work Service as they would be an increase in the variety of options available for young people, not just for work but for various elements of support and they expect to see improvements. The Cabinet Member added there was a need for more variety of workplaces to be involved too such as industry to give a broader potential to the Into Work service. Members considered that the interface between schools/into work needs to start younger to prevent disengagement before it happens.

Members referred to the replacement of the Finance Systems and asked about the impact on staff. The Director advised that they were in the process of the Care Finance Implementation and was sure this would increase efficiency no end.

Members noted that the report made many reference to Adults with mental health needs but there was nowhere near the same level of detail about Children. The

Director explained that this was probably a technical issue in that it reflects the legal responsibility with Children will be on lots of different levels, some won't come into contact with social services so not included in the report. Lots of work was being done on child mental health, with significant Welsh Government investment into schools for resilience. CAHMs was now being managed locally. With children with significant needs there remained the challenge of finding the right service at the right time.

It was noted that there was increased awareness around the increase in self-harming, eating disorders and drug taking and Members asked how closely the service works with schools on these issues. The Director stated that the Early Help Service was significant, it was currently early days but there would be an opportunity for further scrutiny on this. They work closely with schools, issues are identified and they work with the schools and families; there was an expectation that real progress would be made in the forthcoming year. The Cabinet Member added that the RPB had an interest in the Health and Social Services agenda and that recent changes in the regulations relating to membership meant that there was now an array of representatives across the Cardiff and Vale Health Board and there would also be an Education member joining shortly too.

Members made reference to Children's Partnership Boards in other authorities and the Director stated that in Cardiff this sits below the RPB. The Cabinet Member added that the RPB is now the driving force with excellent partnership working, but there are other things happening too such as teachers having ACE training, the introduction of 10 resilience Officers, partnerships between Welsh Government/Health Board/Public Health Wales, which allows the Council to understand what people are doing. There was also a focus in Welsh Government to invest in the next generation.

Members referred to managing demand and complexity of need and the introduction of ALNET, asking if there had been any pinch points in services. The Director stated that they were working closely with colleagues, working with education provisions locally as part of the change to the whole age disability approach.

Members asked if there were any examples of Signs of Safety such as real life case studies that the Committee could see in future. The Assistant Director committed to present videos of real lived experiences to a future meeting.

There was a discussion around the success of the Scottish models in relation to Fostering and that lessons could be learned from this best practice. Members considered an investigative visit to Edinburgh or Glasgow might be worthwhile. It was added that there were also best practices in Scotland relating to the Youth Offending Service, Knife Crime and Social Services as a whole, which could be encompassed in any investigative visit. Officers agreed and also explained that they were looking at other authorities such as Bristol and Newcastle in some areas for comparisons.

Members referred to complaints and noted that while Adults Services remained fairly static, Children's Services complaints had increased compared to 2017/18. The Director explained that the vast majority of complaints are solved at the earliest stage which is stage 1, which was not the case with other local authorities, and that the

figure itself was not high for an authority the size of Cardiff. The complaints however were providing a lens into what needs to improve.

Members referred to the implementation of the recommendations of the Community Services Review and asked what was intended to be done this year. The Director stated that the Scrutiny letter had been helpful; they are working closely with the Health Board on how to embed strength based working as a model of practice.

Members requested that more information is provided on Families First to a future meeting, such as the number of families who have benefitted from the service. Officers agreed to bring a briefing note to a future meeting on this.

With reference to partnership working, Members understood it was essential but asked if there was a greater risk of diluting responsibility with the more people involved. The Director explained that accountability is crystal clear in the legislation and cannot be diluted. Responsibilities can be discharged through a range of arrangements such as partners, but they have to work together to effectively discharge that responsibility. They spend time building relationships and governance so that it flows effectively.

Members were encouraged by the report on Fostering Review and asked if the review would look at the number of foster parents a child has and the impact of the child moving around. The Assistant Director explained that the main aim of the review is to recruit more foster carers; further explaining that there are different types of foster carers such as Emergency/Short Term and long term when there is a permanency order in place.

Members referred to supporting people with learning disabilities and asked if the Council would be ready for March 2020. The Cabinet Member stated that she had been involved in the launch of the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Learning Disabilities; it was key to note that Health never had one before this, which had taken two and a half years to develop. Now the strategy was developed the implementation plans would follow and there would be opportunities to scrutinise these.

Members asked if staff were embracing the cultural changes and were referred the Signs of Safety examples which show what's working well and also what can be worked on further. Training courses alone are not enough, cultural change takes time to embed into practice; the effort and conversations were happening now. The Assistant Director added that there were clear improvement plans for Signs of Safety and measures such as case file audits were undertaken.

Adults Services

Members made reference to Future Challenges and the Cultural Change of the Strength Based Approach, asking how long this would take. The Director explained that it was a change for life, a continual improvement. The change in practice in Adult Services was fundamental to how they work alongside people, how they have commissioned services to deliver flexibility for people's outcomes to help people live their life in their communities.

Members noted the very different cultures of Health and Social Services and asked how these had been integrated to make the Regional Partnership Board so successful. Members were advised that the journey is still ongoing, but there is an energy and mature partnership in place. The test is when making key /tricky decisions like resourcing or political changes, but the strong Governance arrangements have meant that the Board has not been caught off guard on these.

The Chairperson thanked all those who had attended.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Joint Committee, writes to the Cabinet Members conveying the observations of the Joint Committee when discussing the way forward.

6 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

7 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

8 : CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting terminated at 6.35 pm