

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Councillor Jenkins(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Gibson, Philippa Hill-John, Lent,
Lister and McGarry

90 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

91 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lister declared a personal interest in item 5 as a family member has been offered Council Housing.

Sarah McGill declared a personal interest in Item 7

92 : MINUTES - TO FOLLOW

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

93 : PERFORMANCE REPORTS ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES & PEOPLE &
COMMUNITIES Q4 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member Social Care, Health & Well-being, Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities, Louise Barry Assistant Director Adult Services and Jane Thomas Assistant Director, Housing & Communities.

Members were invited to consider Performance Reports in two parts, the first part will be considering performance from the Social Services, Adults Services directorate, and the second part will be considering performance from the People & Communities: Housing & Communities directorate.

Adult Services

The Chairperson invited Cllr Elsmore to make a statement in relation to Adult Services, in which she said that this has been an extremely challenging time and she wished to place on record, the bravery and commitment of the social care workforce. There had been a collective effort from across the Council, Providers and the NHS. The report shows the work of the area; positive results; decreasing unnecessary care packages; increase in signposting to the correct services and an increase in the number of people successfully leaving hospital.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members discussed sickness absence and asked what was being done to address staff wellbeing. Officers explained that they are doing huge amounts of work in this

area; there is a huge amount of corporate support, staff wellbeing etc. It was noted that this is a retrospective report and that figures have stabilised with improvements in both long and short term sickness. There is a management focus to support people back into work. Officers added that there are challenges to frontline staff and there needs to be more focus on this, but agile and homeworking has helped and has improved figures with people being able to manage their own day.

Members discussed the impact of the pandemic on the services being provided and asked about the reality of that. Officers stated that there are some services that are not operating but they are mitigating those by providing more online services and other innovative ways rather than face to face.

Members asked about vacancies and were advised that these levels are monitored; people do leave and at the early stage of the pandemic they were unable to recruit to the vacancies so there are some delays also some are grant funded so are time sensitive however all vacant posts are now out for recruitment.

Members asked about DToC's and officers stated that they had previously discussed at Committee that hospitals are at level 4 in the winter months, this however continued into the summer months which made for a very challenging DToC position; there was a consistent level of demand which hadn't been seen the year before and now there is also the pandemic.

Members asked if there were any ways in which they could improve/support Dementia Friendly, other than the website. The Cabinet Member stated that the website is vital; Dementia Friendly is everyone's business and the private sector play a key role. Things were going well until the pandemic hit. Councillors are ambassadors for people in their communities and the Cabinet Member offered to provide information on how they could support them.

Members asked about numbers of open cases compared to last year and officers agreed to bring this information back to Committee.

Members noted that there were no figures in relation to caseloads for quarter 1. Officers apologised for the omission and offered to bring back to Committee.

People & Communities

The Chairperson invited Cllr Thorne to make a statement in which she said that she was pleased to introduce the report, detailing the work of Housing & Communities through quarter 4 last year and quarter 1 this year, as well as some of the work the area has undertaken during the pandemic. She considered that performance last year was very good and although the pandemic has impacted some of the measures during the first quarter this year, overall performance remains good.

In some areas such as homelessness exceptional progress was made during quarter 1, and this is reflected in the number of rough sleepers.

Over this period the service redeployed staff and provided help to shielding people including food parcels where needed.

The service also organised Together for Cardiff, working with third sector partners to provide volunteering opportunities.

Cllr Thorne stated it was pleasing to see how well used the volunteer portal has been over this period, with almost 3 times the traffic in quarter one 2020-21 compared to the period last year; the portal helped to galvanise the community spirit that came through during the crisis.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Elsmore to make a statement on People and Communities in which she said that she was pleased to bring the report which highlighted the good work being done; it had continued throughout the pandemic providing support to those who suffer from violence.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members were really pleased with the reduction in rough sleepers during the initial pandemic and that so many had taken up accommodation. Members noted that numbers of rough sleepers had started to go up again and asked if there was a concern that this would increase as shoppers return to the City. Officers agreed it was a concern; there are currently around 13 rough sleepers, they bring people into the service regularly, some new, some entrenched; there are more outreach workers on the street working really hard to keep the progress going with a combination of accommodation and services on site.

Members referred to the number of people positively moved on from second stage accommodation and asked about the approach being used. Officers explained that they had focussed the allocation of social housing differently. A vacant property comes up, they see if its suitable for a hostel move on, it's a more proactive way of letting. There are more challenges in second stage accommodation, officers are talking to providers to phase out the less suitable accommodation so people move from hotel to permanent accommodation as this has proved to be successful.

Members understood why the numbers for people visiting Hubs and Libraries were low during the pandemic and noted that figures were very nearly at target before it. Members sought assurance that there wouldn't be less focus on the Hubs and Libraries after the pandemic and that there wouldn't be more of a move to digital. Officers assured Members that they are very much aware of the need for Hubs and Libraries for social integration, wellbeing, events and to help with social isolation. Digital work would be continued alongside this.

Members asked if there would need to be a review of the Hubs and Libraries Strategy in light of social distancing and more call centre type advice rather than face to face. Officers explained that before the recent rise in Covid cases, they had been hoping to start some social distanced groups; officers hope that the pandemic won't last forever and they can return to services but they will learn from the pandemic in some areas of efficiencies but reiterated the importance of face to face and drop in advice for people's wellbeing and addressing loneliness.

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.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities and David Jacques, Housing Development Manager.

Members were advised that this item provided Committee Members with an update on the Council House Build Programme. Members were advised that due to confidential information contained in Appendix 1 this item would be considered in two parts and any questionings relating to Appendix 1 must be asked during the closed session.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Thorne to make a statement in which she said that there had been a commitment to meet the Council House Build target; this hadn't happened due to the pandemic but progress had been made and the Authority was still on track to meet the target of 1,000 houses by 2022.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members considered that the purchasing of properties from Wates could result in some developments being all council housing and asked what was being done to mitigate this. Officers explained that there was a small number where it was all permanent council housing. Mixed developments are very important as well as managed sites; purchasing properties doesn't cut across that. Members considered that decisions being made now in the tenure could impact people's quality of life and asked if the Council had considered this. The Cabinet Member gave the example of 60/70 year old developments in the City that were thriving. Officers added that where there was a potential for a large area of Council tenure, they would ensure there would be a mix with assisted ownership, providing blended tenure and affordable homes.

Members stated that if 'Right to Buy' was reintroduced then a lot of the medium/long term financial planning would be impacted. The Cabinet Member explained that Wales took a decision that the UK Government hasn't; to remove the Right to Buy, adding that this should never be considered when there is so much demand and such long waiting lists.

Members discussed the energy efficient schemes in Rumney and asked if successful, a larger chunk of the portfolio would be built this way in the future. Officers explained that low carbon technology such as the homes on the Rumney High site, was what they want to take forward; including electric vehicle charging points, heating by ground/air heat pumps etc. Costs to deliver such technology are coming down so it is the intention to use in all tenures. Officers added that for the units that are for sale, they are working with providers to provide green mortgages.

Members asked about the market impact on the price of houses purchased from Wates and were advised that the price is the fixed price based on the clause in the contract so market impact is not a factor.

Members discussed quality standards and asked if there has been additional outlay of costs to meet the WHQS. Officers explained that the housing is above the Design Quality Requirements, with improvements to internal layout for accessibility and extra storage for people which also helps with downsizing. What costs more is the increased energy efficient but these costs will come down in time.

Members noted that in 60/70 years' time, the work being done now would still be visible and asked if this was considered in the masterplan of developments such as the Gas Works and Channel View. Officers agreed and stated that legacy was always in their minds and is part of the standards; architecture and design would impact those areas of Cardiff, which is a strategic aim for the Council outside of the housing element; looking at community connectivity, highways etc.

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.

95 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members discussed three key areas of work for the Committee going forward as being:

- Drugs related crime (including ASB) during and following the pandemic
- Social Isolation
- Access to mental health services

96 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

Senior Management Arrangements

This item, requested by Committee Members, provided the opportunity for Members to hear and seek clarity on recent proposals pertaining to the areas of Adult Social Services and People and Communities. This item was added to the agenda under urgent items.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member Social Care, Health & Well-being, Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance, Paul Orders, Chief Executive and Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People & Communities.

The Chairperson asked the Chief Executive to take Members through the relevant proposals, after which he invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked if this decision was a quick response to the departure of the former Director of Social Services. Officers explained that they had lost a Director who had played an effective role, there was an option to replace like for like, however the Chief Executive stated his approach to simplifying the management structure and attaching the statutory responsibilities to the Director who covers social services and its integration to housing and communities supremely well, would bring a high level of collaboration to these areas.

Members were concerned there may be some unpicking of Disability Services, Officers stated that previously there had been separate Directors for Adult Services and Children Services, this would not be the case, this proposal was to unify the whole of the service area. Disability Services had been in adult services and housing and communities and the service would benefit from the new arrangements.

Members asked about the reporting and process arrangements and were advised that Louise Barry would remain the Assistant Director Adult Services and one Assistant Director of Children's Services would be deleted by effective organisational arrangements; there is a strong OM team to be led by Directors. The Cabinet Member added that Cabinet Members work closely and are confident that they can drive improvements better under the new arrangements.

Members asked questions around the financing and were concerned that some services would be lost. Members were assured that once the interim arrangements in Children's Services are ended and the recruitment is complete, the proposal would be managed within the agreed envelope and budgetary position; finance colleagues are comfortable and no services would suffer as a consequence.

Members asked about the practical implications for the Housing and Communities team. Members were advised that the team were well resourced with OM's. Director posts are challenging but experienced Corporate Director and OM Team works well.

Members asked about the rationale of keeping an Assistant Director of Adult Services but losing an Assistant Director of Children's Services. Members were advised that there had been a recent reshaping of OM's in Children's services, and they had been strengthened significantly. It had been difficult to recruit to the post of AD Children's Services; it is in effect, Head of Children's Services, a difficult post to fill with the level of risk that the post carries. The Chief Executive believed that risk should lie at Director level. Members asked what success would look like in 2 years' time and the Chief Executive stated that it would look like Cardiff as having excellent social services over both Adult and Children's; outstanding Early Years and Family Interventions and beginning to turn the curve of demand under a sustainable financial model on both sides.

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.

97 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 4 NOVEMBER 2020

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm