

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 JULY 2021

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

1 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Noted that the Council at its meeting held on 27 May 2021 appointed Councillor Shaun Jenkins as Chair and the following Members to this Committee: Councillors Ali Ahmed, Carter, Gibson, Hill-John, Lent, Lister, Mackie and McGarry.

2 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

3 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Mackie in the attendance list.

6 : LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21 & ADULTS, HOUSING & COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE DELIVERY PLAN

Members were advised that for this item, officers would provide a presentation which would be split into two parts. The first part details the Annual Report followed by an immediate opportunity for Members questions. Following questions on the Annual Report, the presentation will then resume with an overview of the Directorate Delivery Plan, ending with a further opportunity for Members questions.

The Chairperson welcomed: Cllr Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Well-being, Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities; Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Jane Thomas, Director of Adults, Housing & Communities.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Elsmore to make a statement in which she said that this was Sarah McGill's first report. There have been some unique challenges this past year and she hoped that Members can see that Committees comments and recommendations have been integrated into this report. The report is sharper and the language is more citizen focused. Cllr Elsmore went on to outline some of the challenges faced in the previous year including a significant amount of PPE being

delivered and over 1000 staff supported to work remotely; many staff have been repurposed to critical roles into social services. The Cabinet Member considered that the report is a real credit to staff and care providers across Cardiff and she hoped Members could see the spirit of great integration across Adults, Housing and Communities.

Members were provided with the presentation after which the Chairperson invited comments and observations from Committee Members;

Members asked why they could not see an analysis of this year from the Director. Officers explained that there was an analysis of this year's activity included in the report, it identified areas where work was still to be done. The CRW inspection was a very significant event last year it gave a very thorough inspection of the service which involved a range of different workshops and that led to the development of an action plan. This action plan will inform the DDP and feedback to CRW so significant assessments have been carried out throughout the year.

Members considered that there seemed to be more focus on achievements and asked if next year there would be a more personal, frank analysis with greater detail on the challenges. Officers advised it was more appropriate to include this in the action plan appended to the report as that shows the areas requiring action. Members considered the report should be open about significant challenges. Officers stated they would be happy to reflect on this and maybe draw it out a bit in the introduction of the report.

Members were advised that last year was the previous Director's final report and Committee were critical of her 9/10 page analysis. The Cabinet Member explained it is important to remember the report is retrospective and refers to a period in time. Members stated that in previous years Committee had spoken about Directors talking about the service but this year, in contrast to previous ones, it is very stark with no clear Director assessment, leaning too heavily on achievements and doesn't talk enough about challenges. Members were advised that the Director had given space to the Cabinet Members to enable them to have paragraphs in the report and that the Director deserves great credit for her considerable achievements in the area in what has been a particularly challenging year.

Members congratulated the service area on how they have dealt with the pandemic and the collaborative working. Members asked if officers could expand on what they felt went well and what lessons were learned during the period of the pandemic. Officers explained they were unique circumstances, there had been a rapid identification of problems to be solved in each of the cases, lots of logistics and working with the business community, ensuring there was clarity to understand and the ability for people to work together developing an action plan to be delivered in rapid time. As for learning, the ability to get a whole system response which could be applied in other areas of public health challenges going forward.

Members referred to staffing and noted there was no mention of Adult Services vacancies even though there were quite a few and also there was quite a lot of sickness absence. Officers explained they were seeing difficulties across the council in terms of recruitment. With regards to Adult Services some posts are temporary funded but not as many as in Children Services. Referring to sickness, this was in

relation to directly delivering services such as home care and some due to Covid, this is now improving although some staff do have long Covid.

Members noted there had been previous discussion on the format of the report and considered this report had a lot of graphics but it was not easy to access the details within, such as what are the next steps or proposals to make the improvements. Officers explained the priorities have been identified briefly in the report but they were provided in detail in the Directorate Delivery Plan which was being considered next. Going forward these two reports should be seen together with the Annual Report providing a strategic assessment and identifying priorities, with the delivery of them captured in the DDP.

Members were provided with presentation on the Directorate Delivery Plan.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Elsmore to make a statement in which she said that this was a comprehensive plan showing the extent of the programme aimed at integrating services to move forward into the future; Services wrapped around individuals living in their locality from local community well-being teams and hubs. The Cabinet Member hoped Committee could see the integration.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Thorne to make a statement in which she said that the DDP shows how the service is trying to get the right support in the right place at the right time for people. There had been an increase in staff at the Money Advice Service, an increased demand in family homelessness and Rough sleepers were down to 10 regularly at the moment. COVID had brought to the fore the fact that there was lots of overcrowding in smaller properties so the Cabinet Member was pleased to have these interventions going forward.

Members asked if officers were confident all the important priorities had been captured as they were unable to see a hierarchy of importance of tasks to be done within the DDP. Officers were confident, stating that everything set as a priority is reflected in there. Officers added that was the focus in terms of delivery, the route of clear actions and targets to deliver. These will need to be held to account next year.

Members noted it was a huge directorate with so much work to do and asked officers if it felt much bigger to them. Officers agreed yes it was a big directorate but they were really clear that there had been lots of crossover and some barriers have already gone. Wrap around services benefit from a broad remit and this is absolutely the right direction to join up the services, things can be seen more clearly now so it was not considered the directorate was too big.

Members referred to metrics for next year and asked how confident officers were with the transition back into face to face or hybrid services or meetings. Officers were very hopeful, hubs were open and they hope to open a Day Centre next week. There is a need to keep virtual or remote offers too as these have been very useful in not leaving people behind. There would of course be face to face meetings for those who want them but keeping the hybrid/remote meetings was important as people find them more flexible and accessible. Officers added that there is a huge workload at the moment with pent up demand such as housing repairs etc. also the workforce are tired, these are genuine challenges ahead in the next few months.

Members referred to voids and the backlog of maintenance and asked if officers were confident they could get an increase in staff to address this. Officers explained they have allowed considerable resource in the budget for repairs and maintenance. It was stressed however that recruitment is difficult at the moment and also the cost of materials have gone up. The number of voids have increased as people are moving so there will be a hiatus but with an in-house team and a contractor in place this should ease and hopefully by the autumn there will be a pool of small contractors to use too.

The Cabinet Member added that hopefully a year from now Members will see the impact the integration of the Directorates has had.

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.

7 : HOUSING DEVELOPMENT NEW BUILD SCHEMES - AUTHORITY TO PROCEED

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Cabinet Report for this item contains two confidential Appendices and should Members wish to ask a question on those Appendices it would need to be taken in a closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed: Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities; Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Dave Jaques –Housing Development Manager.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Thorne to make a statement in which she said that this was an exciting time as they were entering the phase of development where a number of programmes were starting on site.

Members were provided with an overview of the cabinet report, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members noted that the package deal was now going to Linc and asked if there was a potential if the Council could buy a site from Linc and referenced the speed in this decision. Officers said yes this enables them to maximise the delivery of affordable housing and enables both projects to move forward without one being delayed. The Cabinet Member added this means that the Michaelston site can be expanded and delivered earlier.

Members referred to the joint scheme with Hafod and noted they could not see composite images of how it would look asking how much influence the council has on design. Officers explained it was a 50/50 partnership approach, the Council pushes on standards such as energy efficiency, green infrastructure and the size of properties. There was a 50/50 split on style and architecture. Hafod are a reputable company with a big development programme with high standards.

Members asked if it was possible within the scheme to have fewer flats and to have more houses or even the first ever detached council houses. Officers explained the site mix is finely balanced for financial viability, if they were to lower the density than

that would impact on that financial viability. The scheme is already fairly low density as the Council wanted to retain a locally listed building to turn into flats for supported housing, there is a partial flood zone so they are unable to build on part of it, also trees are to be retained and there are sewers running through the centre, which are all constraints they have to work around. There are a lot of larger family homes on site, the flats are larger than Welsh Government standards and all have balconies and outdoor space. The Cabinet member added that she had visited the Mill site this week and the zero home, it was a wonderful sight but the homes were slightly smaller than Welsh Government standard so she considered it was great that the Council, with partners, were able to deliver larger homes.

Members considered it was a good report and an interesting way of working and an interesting proposition. Members noted Linc were a good provider but were concerned about the Council losing any potential gains and some control over the scheme. Officers agreed there was less control with package deals so they were careful of what they considered to take on. Officers added that don't need to take on a lot to meet the Council targets as they have their own sites too but if an opportunity or a quick win etc. becomes available then it is considered. Officers stated that the partnership approach with Housing Associations was heavily prioritised by the Welsh Government in order that Local Authorities and Housing Associations can share resources to mitigate against the lack of resources in development generally at the moment. Officers explained that there would be a shared approach in tendering, procurement, vetting, the design brief, agreeing the specification and the evaluation.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments on the confidential information and Members were reminded that Committee are required to consider this in a closed session to discuss information deemed exempt, in accordance with paragraphs 14 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting

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.

8 : PREVENT STRATEGY

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities; Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnership, Officers from Cardiff's Prevent Team, led by Steph Kendrick-Doyle, South Wales Police, Chief Inspector Michelle Conquer and Martyn Thomas from the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit.

The Chairperson advised Members that in accordance with the legal reasoning detailed on the meeting's agenda, this briefing, on Cardiff's Prevent Programme would be received in a closed session.

Members were reminded that Committee are required to consider this item in a closed session to discuss information deemed exempt, in accordance with paragraphs 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting

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.

9 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

10 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.

The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm