

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2021

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

21 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Gibson and Mackie.

22 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

23 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

24 : Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORTS AND CURRENT PRESSURES - ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING & COMMUNITIES

Members were advised that this item provided the opportunity to explore Q1 Performance and to receive an update on current pressures for both Adult Services and Housing & Communities.

The item would be split into two parts; The first part would consider Quarter 1 performance and current pressures for Cllr Elsmore's portfolio and the second part would consider the performance and pressures for Cllr Thorne's portfolio.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Well-being; Jane Thomas, Director Adults, Housing and Communities; Helen Evans Operational Manager Advice and Benefits in Housing and Communities and Khalid Osman Into Work Coordinator in Housing and Communities, to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement after which Members received a presentation from Officers. Members were invited to make observations and comments and ask questions;

Members noted the current pressures and difficult situation facing the service and asked about the likelihood of service failure. Officers advised that they are working hard to make sure this does not happen and that services continue whilst being mindful of the additional pressures that the winter months could bring.

Members asked what was being done as contingency for this and were advised that the service is working towards better relationships with service providers over the longer term, they were aware of the need to grow the market to ease pressures and also to really focus on re-enablement.

A discussion took place around the Carers Academy, Members stated they were impressed by the innovation and speed in which this had been delivered and encouraged this to continue.

With reference to the use of Occupational Therapists, Members noted that they were now being used as an O/T first approach to ensure that everyone is eligible for re-enablement when care packages are assigned to social workers.

Members discussed funding and were advised that the service did not know when they would receive additional funding from Welsh Government but were hopeful it would be in December. Members noted that the Recovery Fund will offset the tailing off of the Covid Hardship Fund.

Members asked how the quality of service was monitored and were advised that contact officers visited care homes to monitor and regularly liaise with care providers.

Members were concerned to hear that it seemed inevitable that due to the current situation, service users were likely to receive a reduced quality of care but were assured that officers seemed hopeful that this wouldn't be for a prolonged period of time.

Discussing staff sickness rates, Members were advised that there has been an increase in short term sickness absence due to covid and that long term sickness absences would continue to be assessed on a regular basis.

With reference to care equipment and aids, Members considered that Officers could contact service users to determine if these could be returned and reused. Officers explained that they have a social media campaign for this, however some Members had not seen this and considered this campaign could be given a higher profile.

The Chairperson advised that Committee would now consider Cllr Thorne's portfolio and he welcomed Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement after which Members received a presentation from Officers. Members were invited to make observations and comments and ask questions;

Members referred to the target of 1,000 Council homes to be built by December and asked how likely it was that this target would be met. Members were advised that this was likely although there was no guarantee. Members requested numbers of Council house builds already developed.

A discussion took place around Out of County placement. Members were assured that families would not be separated and that all cases are considered on a case by case basis, noting that there was more work to be done in this area.

Members discussed Voids and were advised that there had been challenges in this area due to supply issues but now there were increased numbers of staff so turnaround of properties should speed up. Members were also advised that the Council does buy properties from private landlords.

Members asked about the launch of the Male Domestic Abuse Action Plan and were advised that this had been delayed.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

25 : NOISY NEIGHBOURS

The Chairperson advised that for this item, Members had the opportunity to explore the pathway for noise complaints which derive from private, domestic properties.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment; Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities; Will Lane Operational Manager, Public Protection, Shared Regulatory Services & Sian James, Team Manager, Neighbourhood Services, Pollution Control, Shared Regulatory Services to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Members to make statements after which Members received a presentation from Officers. Members were invited to make observations and comments and ask questions;

Members asked how the service measures the satisfaction rate of complainants using the service. Officers advised that this was not currently being done, it had been previously, and they were looking to include a survey in the Noise Policy.

Members noted the challenges that residents had experienced when logging issues and also with response times. Members considered that there should be better communication with local Councillors and residents, explaining what can and can't be done, better explaining statutory noise nuisance, publicising the service and its remit and therefore managing people's expectations.

Members discussed the night-time service and were advised that it was not 7 days a week due to resource issues, and this was a challenge right across the service. Members noted the disparity between incidents reported on weekdays and weekends.

Members expressed concern over the confusing and lengthy processes for logging complaints.

Members noted that the service does sometimes recommend that residents take their own action if statutory noise nuisance cannot be established, however they do encourage residents to contact the service in the first instance.

Members sought clarification on decibel levels and Officers advised that there was no decibel level for statutory noise nuisance, this was determined by Officer judgement taking into account a number of factors.

Members discussed noise nuisance in high student population areas and considered that the Universities could do more work on this and take on more responsibility around the issue.

Members discussed the overall role of the Shared Regulatory Service which also includes Trading Standards and noted the balancing act needed in managing it.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

26 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were advised that there were only two responses to Chairs letters outstanding.

Members were advised that in relation to future scrutiny of the RLDP, Environmental Scrutiny Cttee would lead on a Task and Finish Group looking at the strategic options of the RLDP and the Environment Chair had invited a representative from each Scrutiny Committee to sit on the group. The Terms of Reference were currently being drawn up but it was likely that the meetings would run from November to February over three meetings. Expressions of interest were sought, an initial interest was received from Cllr Lent. It was agreed the Principal Scrutiny Committee Officer would email Committee members with an overview and invite any further expressions of interest.

27 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

28 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10 November 2021 at 4.30pm.

The meeting terminated at 6.40 pm