

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins
16 Oct 2019



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Councillors Susan Elsmore, Lynda Thorne, Chris Weaver
Cabinet Members for Social Care, Health & Well-being, Housing & Communities and
Finance, Modernisation & Performance.
County Hall
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Dear Susan, Lynda and Chris,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 OCT 2019 –
OLDER PEOPLE: ACCESS TO INFORMATION, ADVICE & SERVICES.**

As Chair of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I wish to thank you and officers for attending Committee, providing Members with an opportunity to explore how the council is accommodating the needs of older people in accessing council services in line with its development of the digital strategy. Although we were unfortunately unable to welcome Cllr Weaver to Committee, as Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance I believe it pertinent that this letter is also addressed to you due to it providing Member's feedback on the digital strategy.

As mentioned at Committee, this agenda item held particular focus on the work of council Hubs and the online resource directory, Dewis Cymru, in line with ensuring the needs of Cardiff's ageing population are included within the council's digital agenda.

Members firstly wish to note their appreciation at the work displayed at Committee in both acknowledging and meeting the needs of Cardiff's older population, and the shared, cross-council recognition in valuing Cardiff's older population along with the joint desire to ensure their needs are considered. However, as a Committee we felt there are a number of key areas which require more significant analysis and work. With regard to the comments made by Cllr Elsmore that the term 'elderly' is ageist and redundant, and that the correct term should instead be 'older people', the Committee wish to highlight that there are different connotations to the terms 'elderly' and 'older people'. Specifying that 'elderly' can be used to describe the much more vulnerable, less mobile part of an ageing community. Whereby 'older person' could be used in more generic terms. Members wish to raise their concerns that encompassing this stakeholder group under one term could potentially allow the most vulnerable to be more easily excluded as the council pursues its digital agenda.

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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During Committee, Members raised their apprehension regarding the lack of specific acknowledgment to the older person stakeholder group within the digital strategy, drawing particular attention to Cardiff's key well-being objective that, 'Cardiff is a great place to grow older'. Although Members understood the reasoning provided for the holistic approach, whereby people should be treated on their needs, not by their age, Members are concerned that we, as an authority, are aware of the continuing growth in Cardiff's older population and that a key section of this stakeholder group are not 'online'. Due to such significant information, which is known, Members wish to note that key demographics should be both specifically acknowledged and targeted within this digital strategy. Members would again reiterate both the need, and importance of acknowledging older people in order to ensure that the wide ranging needs and capabilities within this stakeholder group are understood and addressed. Members would appreciate if they could have sight of the data which provides information on what services the older person stakeholder group are currently using digitally, along with the data referenced at Committee that indicates that there is a need, desire and capability for this stakeholder group to fully progress within this digital agenda and to use digital channels by preference.

When questioning how the older population fed into the development of this strategy, Members were advised that consultation did take place with Cardiff Citizens Panel. Whilst Members are glad this was conducted, they do hold apprehension that this does not indicate that a good representation of society is being consulted with – particularly in relation to the elderly. Our recommendation is for stronger consultation which ensures the needs and ability of the older person, including the elderly and those most vulnerable, are specifically included through the use of listening groups and user testing with the elderly when developing this strategy.

At Committee it was mentioned that although one of the principals of the digital strategy is 'digital first', Cardiff will not be taking forward a digital by default approach as not all council services lend themselves to being digital by default. Although Members agree with this statement, they do hold concerns that these comments are contrary to what is stated within the strategy, which specifies that the strategy will move the council towards digital by default and that accessible alternative routes, which allow for interaction, will eventually become the exception and not the norm. Members wish to highlight that reducing such contact could have a significantly detrimental impact on an elderly individual, possibly heightening their social isolation, directly impacting the wellbeing objective that 'Cardiff is a great place to grow older'. In addition Members also wish to note that taking away resources from one area, will undoubtedly put a strain on resources elsewhere.

Members were consistently advised at Committee that there is an awareness that not all members of society will be able to fully access digital services and that they must have access to a channel which best suits them, yet this is not a message consistently portrayed within the strategy. Although Members appreciate that a 'digital strategy' will undoubtedly have a focus and drive for pushing forward a digital agenda, they hold concerns that the lack of recognition for this stakeholder group possibly indicates that greater cross council collaboration is required when developing strategies.

Members were pleased to receive an overview of the work currently being undertaken in the Hubs and appreciated the walk-through of the Dewis website. However concerns were raised regarding the current channels of communicating with the elderly in order to ensure that the particularly vulnerable sections of this stakeholder group, such as the housebound, are aware of the services and assistance which exist. During the discussion Members were pleased to receive personal goals and desires towards ensuring that this council moves forward in a way which ensures that the majority of older people are digitally connected. Members were also interested to hear of the work currently ongoing with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales towards making Cardiff an 'age friendly' city. If possible, Members would like to receive further information on this work which was referenced at committee.

Members also welcomed Cllr Elsmore's offer to consider alternative modes of communication and the proposal to take forward consideration of a bus campaign, in order to connect with the hard to reach section of this group. In addition to this consideration, Members would also recommend utilising radio, newspapers and television, the more traditional forms of media as a means of engaging with this group as these are key mediums which can most easily link into the elderly age bracket, particularly those who are housebound. Members also note the comments that more work is required to ensure that all professionals entering an individual's home have access to the services currently on offer and are able to efficiently signpost, providing an individual with the right information at the right time. Members acknowledge that such work is currently being assisted through Dewis' App.

Members concur that social prescribing is a way of further connecting with this stakeholder group however hold concerns that there could be discrepancies in the services on offer at GP's and the Hubs. Members acknowledge the comments made regarding the importance of Hubs in making sure older people are not excluded, however hold concerns regarding the accessibility and travelling distance to the Hubs for this stakeholder group. Members also wish to highlight that there are certain parts of the city that either do not have a Hub or would not hold easy access due to the large locality it serves. Members would therefore appreciate information on the accessibility radius around all Cardiff Hubs for the older population.

Thank you once again to you and officers for attending Committee and for your welcoming approach to this area receiving scrutiny attention. As detailed in this letter, we as a Committee believe there is still significant work required in order to ensure that this key section of society's needs and requirements are adequately addressed when developing the council's digital agenda. Although our recommendations and requests are detailed above, for the sake of completeness, we also include them below.

Our recommendations are:

- When implementing the digital strategy, greater consideration is required in respect of services for older people, with a specific focus on how older people will be included in the strategy. Such focused consideration will ensure the wide ranging needs and capabilities are both understood and addressed.

- Stronger consultation which ensures that the needs and ability of the older person, including the elderly and those most vulnerable, are specifically included when developing this strategy. This could be conducted through listening groups and/or user testing.
- With regard to connecting to the 'hard to reach' section of this older person stakeholder group; Members believe there to be scope for a specific strategy to be developed and would also recommend utilising radio, newspapers and television, the more traditional forms of media as a way of ensuring better connection with the most vulnerable and effective delivery of the services and assistance the council provides.

Our requests are:

- Sight of the data which provides information on what services the older person stakeholder group are currently using digitally, along with the data referenced at Committee that indicates that there is a need, desire and capability for this stakeholder group to fully progress within this digital agenda.
- Information on the work currently ongoing with the Older Peoples Commissioner for Wales towards making Cardiff an 'age friendly' city.
- Information on the accessibility radius around all Cardiff Hubs for the older population.
- Information on user testing that is undertaking in relation to older people.

We look forward to your response in light of our recommendations and requests. Once again thank you for your co-operation in facilitating a frank and open discussion on the matter.

Yours,



COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS

Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Sarah McGill, Corporate Director

Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services

Jane Thomas, Assistant Director

Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer

Phil Bear, Service Manager

Helen Evans, OM Advice & Benefits

Sharon Miller, Regional Co-ordinator

Jessica Player, Project Manager

Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy & Performance

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