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My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins  
23 Oct 2020

Councillor Susan Elsmore  
Cabinet Member Social Care, Health & Wellbeing  
Councillor Lynda Thorne  
Cabinet Member Housing & Communities  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Cllr Elsmore & Cllr Thorne,

## **COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7 OCT 2020**

As Chairman of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I wish to thank you and officers for attending Committee, providing Members with an opportunity to understand and consider the recent proposals to senior management arrangements pertaining to Adult Social Services and People and Communities, the Performance Reports which covered Q4 & Q1 (Jan – Jun 2020) for Adult Social Services and Housing and Communities and lastly to provide Members with an update on the Council House Build Programme. Following their consideration of these items Members of the Committee have requested that I feedback the following comments and observations to you.

### **Senior Management Arrangements: Committee Briefing**

Following Cabinet consideration of the Senior Management Arrangements Report at September's Cabinet, Members requested a briefing regarding the proposals which pertain to the areas of Adult Services and People & Communities. During the meeting, Members explored the rationale for these proposals, with particular regard to the proposal to further unify adult services and housing and communities by the creation of a Director of Adult, Housing & Communities post and were advised the proposals would not only help simplify accountabilities, but also assist the Council in building upon key preventative services and initiatives', especially those facing challenges due to the health pandemic. The origins for the proposals including the timeliness were further explored by Members who heard that although it is never ideal to lose a member of the senior management team these proposal help turn the departure into a positive situation, providing an opportunity to strengthen and encourage continued links between the services. Although Members note the positive foundations and aspirations for these proposals, it is noteworthy to stress the importance of keeping a keen eye and stimulating frank dialogue on any potential, unforeseen, challenges these proposals may bring.

During the meeting it was highlighted that currently there is a unified approach within the Council's learning disability team and concerns were raised regarding if the proposal to establish two social service Director posts, could potentially hold a detrimental impact on transitional services. Members welcomed the comments that services which already hold a unified process would be strengthened under the proposals. With regard to reporting arrangements, although Members heard these proposals should have limited to no impact on the current reporting arrangements, Members do wish to stress the importance in ensuring reporting arrangements and staff structures for services across adult social services and people and communities are clearly clarified to Members; to avoid any potential confusion. If the proposals are set, Members would **recommend** clearly defined reporting arrangements and structures be cascaded out to all Council Members to ensure thorough understanding of the new arrangements.

In terms of the financial implications these proposals may bring onto the Housing Revenue Account, Members note and welcome the assurances provided at Committee that Financial Officers have confirmed that a potential £70,000 expenditure can be obtained within the HRA Budget without any detrimental impact on services. Under the vein of resources, and noting both the significant amount and nature of work undertaken within both adult services and housing and communities, Members questioned if the proposal to further unify the teams could potentially hold practical implications on the teams. Members were advised that both areas benefit from well-resourced and well established management arrangements which mitigate such risks.

With regard to defining success, and establishing whether this change will, or is having, the intended impact, Members wish to stress the importance of tangible measures being applied in order to aid in the analysis and to determine the success of the proposals and would **recommend** implementing and monitoring tangible targets such as staff retention targets within the service areas and targets surrounding the lack of detrimental impact on transitional services in order to assist in attributing potential future successes to these proposals.

At the meeting the CEO stated that there were no right or wrong answers. Whilst there isn't a binary choice of a right or wrong answer per se, there is obviously good and bad decisions, and the reality is this could turn out to be a good or bad decision (and also one that turns out to have little impact). If it turns out that this decision weakens the oversight and strategic direction of Social Services, then it could turn out to be a bad decision. But similarly, if it turns out to place greater focus on Children's and Adult Services, and in particular those areas of service delivery which need most improvement then it could turn out to be a good decision.

So in summary, this change could have significant consequences, good or bad, and it is important that all those involved understand what success looks like so as to ensure that if, once this change has been made, the expected positive impact on service delivery isn't being achieved, then mitigation can be taken.

## **Performance Reports – Adult Social Services**

Members firstly wish to note and pay tribute to the Council's social care workforce during this exceptionally challenging period, and note that their valiant efforts is reflected within the figures of the performance reports considered at Committee.

During the meeting concerns were raised regarding the trend of sickness rates and how, despite previous methods to address such issues, the problem appears to still persist. Being mindful to the current context, and that the sickness rate in Q1 has slightly decreased and the corporate support currently available to staff, Members do wish to stress the importance of a continued focus on staff wellbeing particularly those on the frontline. Being again mindful to the current context, concerns were also raised regarding staff vacancy levels within Adult Services and Members note the assurances that vacancies are continuing to be monitored and that all positions are currently out for advert and in the process of recruitment.

Questions were also raised regarding if the pandemic had impacted individuals' accessing information advice and support services and were pleased to hear how information and advice is still accessible through a range of formats and that although some services have been unable to operate during this time, where possible, they have positively adapted, providing their service through alternative means.

Concerns were also raised regarding the high figures surrounding delayed transfers of care (DToC) throughout 2019 with the winter pressures of 2018 continuing into the summer months; providing a difficult position even before the initial outbreak of Covid-19. Members note the assurances that the current levels of enhanced partnership working under the health pandemic will benefit such areas moving forward.

Finally, as mentioned at Committee Members wish to **request** the following information; a comparison on the current number of open cases compared to last year, information on the average case load covering the periods Q4 2019-20 to Q2 2020-21, and finally information on the recently launched Dementia Friendly Cardiff website and how we, as Members, can support Cardiff's progress towards becoming a Dementia Friendly city.

## **Performance Reports – People & Communities**

During Committee, Members noted the positive reduction in rough sleepers during the pandemic and questioned the potential for the number of rough sleepers increasing in line with footfall on the streets. Members note this is a shared concern and the increased efforts currently being deployed in maintaining the positive progress achieved during the pandemic. As the number of individuals positively moved on from second stage accommodation has also seen a steady increase Members welcome the changed focus in allocation of properties, with a more proactive view of lettings and an increased focus on rapid re-housing.

In terms of the Hubs & Library programme within the current context, Members sought confirmation that there would be a continued focus on the programme, regardless of the current switch under social distancing regulations to provide

services through alternative means and were pleased to be informed that Hubs and their services will continue to receive an integral focus due to their ability to stimulate and encourage social integration and wellbeing. Members note it is likely that the digital services recently developed under the pandemic may also continue as they too have brought positive impact and present individuals' with a choice of accessing services most suited to the individual. In addition, Members questioned if the current context, including social distancing regulations, meant a possible need to relook at the overall programme and although Members heard that a full review of the strategy is not currently required, there will be continued monitoring of the changes in services in order to capitalise on the positive learning brought forward by the pandemic.

With regards to voids, Members wish to **request** an update on the current level of void properties in Cardiff which includes an update on the in-house team, and, as previously provided in the last Void quarterly update received by Members, information on service performance measures and contractor performance.

### **Council House Build Programme Update**

With regard to tenure types and the potential for some developments to be solely council houses, Members heard that within the acquisition of properties from Wates, to ensure a mix of tenure, the Llandudno Road development which includes 16 units, there is consideration for 4 of the properties to be low cost home ownership through the Assisted Home Ownership scheme. Although Members heard that the importance of mixed communities is innate to the programme, Members do wish to seek further commitment that mixed tenure within developments will remain a key consideration.

With regard to energy efficiency, Members note the intention to replicate the low carbon technology on all builds moving forward in advance of the forthcoming Welsh Government energy performance standards and that the proposal to change the approach of developments by moving into contracting arrangements (as opposed to partnership with developers) would facilitate an easier ability to change standards; providing greater opportunity to improve the standard of what is delivered to all tenures.

In relation to acquisition of properties from Wates, Members firstly questioned if the price had been agreed and note the response that the price is fixed due to a clause in the contract. I do however wish to seek assurance that once the acquisition of these properties has taken place, the purchase price will be made available to members of the public and published within the Officer Decision Register on the Council's website. Given that this is the first time the purchase of properties has happened during the programme of work, Members also wish to seek clarity on if this purchase was an exception during the challenges brought on by the outbreak of Covid-19, or if it could potentially be a shift within the business model. If the latter, Members wish to stress the importance in remaining mindful to medium and longer term implications and potential challenges if developers perceive this option as the 'norm'. In terms of the quality standards of the properties to be purchased, questions were also raised if the difference in quality standards may mean an additional outlay in costs in order to meet the Welsh housing design quality standards and Members

heard what will cost more is the increase in energy performance however it is anticipated these costs should decrease over time.

Members note the continued passion and ambition by yourself and officers to deliver high-quality homes and wish to encourage and drive this passion by stressing the need to ensure it is converted into real tangible results and that each and every property developed is liveable for each resident. Adding a real, and lasting positive impact on their quality of life. As discussed a number of times at Committee, Members note the importance of placemaking, and the importance of high-quality, liveable communities that enrich people's lives. During committee we briefly touched on examples such as Poundbury, in Dorset, and heard about how urban renewal is currently taking place in Cardiff. Members do wish to reiterate and stress, that the high level decisions currently being developed continue to be thought out with the drive for a lasting legacy, and that the properties currently being developed will add value to residents who occupy such properties' throughout the whole lifecycle of the developments. Members note the comments at Committee that this lasting legacy approach is at the forefront of the programme and wish to encourage its prevalence continuing. Members also note the offer made at Committee regarding receiving a presentation detailing the proposals and redevelopment within the Channel View and Gaswork site, and when the time is right, possibly visiting such sites. The Committee **recommends** that you use examples like Poundbury to help shape the Council's approach to building better and more beautiful communities.

Thank you once again to you and officers for attending Committee. Being mindful that this is a relatively long letter and for ease of reference the recommendations and requests captured within this letter are as follows:

### **Senior Management Arrangements: Committee Briefing**

- **Recommend:** clearly defined reporting arrangements and structures be cascaded out to all Council Members to ensure thorough understanding is obtained.
- **Recommend:** in order to determine the success of the proposals, consideration be given to implementing and monitoring tangible targets within a reasonable timeframe

### **Performance Reports – Adult Social Services**

- **Request;**
  - A comparison on the current number of open cases compared to last year;
  - Information on the average case load covering the periods Q4 2019-20 to Q2 2020-21;
  - Information on the recently launched Dementia Friendly Cardiff website and how Members can support Cardiff's progress towards becoming a Dementia Friendly city.

## **Performance Report – People & Communities**

- **Request;**
  - An update on the current level of void properties in Cardiff which includes an update on the in-house team and information on service performance measures and contractor performance.

### **Council House Build Programme Update**

- **Recommend:** utilising examples like Poundbury to help shape the Council's approach to building better and more beautiful communities.

Yours,



**COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS**

**Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

cc. Paul Orders, Chief Executive

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Louise Barry, Assistant Director, Adult Social Services

Jane Thomas, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities

David Jaques, Housing Development Manager