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My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins
8 November 2021

Councillor Susan Elsmore
Cabinet Member Social Care, Health & Wellbeing
Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member Housing & Communities
Sent via e-mail

Dear Cllr Elsmore & Cllr Thorne,

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 OCT 2021 – QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND CURRENT PRESSURES

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 consider the Quarter 1 Performance Report and to also receive an update on the current position for both Adult Services and Housing & Communities.

The seriousness of the current pressures and their ramifications is acutely recognised by Members, and we firstly wish to thank you and officers for bringing this to our attention and for the presentations offered at the meeting. Following the update on the current context and the steps being taken to address current pressures, we explored the possibility of service failure and the implications this would present for those vulnerable individuals requiring service. It was confirmed that yourselves and officers are working to ensure service failure does not occur, and that the service areas are not at 'breaking point' due to the current backlog being of a manageable number. We were further informed that it is essential the service areas both recognise and prepare for the situation potentially worsening in line with winter pressures. In accordance with this, we then sought clarity on your continuity plans and it was confirmed the focus will be on supporting those most vulnerable, to expand reablement opportunities and to grow the market and strengthen the council's long-term relationship with care providers.

We welcome the focus on preparing for pressures worsening however we feel it is essential that adequate projections are used to forecast pressures on the service area. For this

reason, we **recommend** that to prepare for the upcoming winter months, the service area recruit a statistician (or similar) to provide accurate information on key pressures, which in turn will offer critical insight into the possible shortfalls and requirements.

Should the pressures indeed worsen in the winter months, we ask we be made aware as soon as practically possible to provide us with a further opportunity to explore the situation and the measures put in place to mitigate risk. Furthermore, and upon reflection, it was felt amongst Committee Members that the current pressures detailed at the meeting were so significant, they in-turn eclipsed the Quarter 1 Performance data and due to constraints, we were not able to explore both past and current performance in adequate detail. As a result, we request that in the future these updates be separated from Performance Monitoring items.

Q1 Performance & Current Pressures – Adult Services

Given the current context, Members were advised that individuals may see some deterioration in the quality of their service they receive. However, it was confirmed the service area will continue to work to monitor the quality of care through contact officers and regular liaison with providers. Although Members understand and empathise with the current context, given the typical clientele in receipt of services we wish to stress that high levels of quality of care continue, or where these may be impacted, they continue to be addressed and resolved as a matter of urgency through the escalating concerns process.

As stated at the meeting, the innovative proposals and speed of establishing the Carers Academy is welcomed and commended by Members. However, in line with our earlier comments regarding the need to employ a statistician (or similar), Members are concerned that the current aim of the Academy supporting 120 people into employment over a six-month period may not be adequate for the pressures which potentially lie ahead. Members wish to again reiterate and emphasise the benefit of using data to adequately inform and address current issues.

In line with the current situation Members welcome the steps taken to address challenges which were detailed at the meeting. In particular, we note the 'Trusted Assessor' pilot which sees Occupational Therapists assisting with the increased demand for social care assessments and pressures on domiciliary care. In line with this and remaining mindful to the current and potential pressures, Members **recommend** you explore more innovative

ways of coping with current and future pressures by expanding the use of Occupation Therapists and other professionals where demand is high.

Concern was further raised regarding the end of the Welsh Government's Covid-19 Hardship fund. However, we were pleased to be informed that the upcoming Recovery Fund should help to offset the ending of Hardship funding stream. We note detail on the Recovery Fund should be received in December 2021.

In terms of the continued challenge of sickness rates we sought clarity on the proposed action plan, and it was confirmed there is ongoing assessments of long-term sickness case. We note there is a current rise in short term sickness cases as a result of the pandemic and we hope that your ongoing work to expand the market will help to address this issue.

Regarding the recognised challenge of lack of equipment and aids, Members feel additional efforts to contact existing individuals to see if they still require their equipment is needed. Members note social media posts have gone out on this matter however not all our Committee Members saw the post, signalling an increase in social media presence is required. We also feel more communication methods need to be utilised to reach a wider audience. Leading on from this, we also feel an overall review of how we retrieve, recondition and reallocate equipment may be required. We therefore **recommend** more communication is done on the call for equipment, including through the continued use of social media outlets, notification on the council and hub websites, posters in hubs, liaising with Adviceline staff to make initial enquires and a letter drop, targeted at relevant residents or family members. We also **recommend** an overall review on how we retrieve and reallocate stock. We deem the review should focus particularly on if adequate support is provided to residents who may have heavier equipment, such as stairs lifts or hoists, redundant in their properties.

Q1 Performance & Current Pressures – Housing & Communities

As you are aware, detail on the current status of the Council House New Build Programme could not be provided at the meeting. Given that this is such a significant objective, Members were surprised that this information was not readily known. As such, Members would like to **request** information on how many houses are currently complete, how many are currently under construction and confirmation on if the target of 1,000 council properties by December 2022 will be met.

During the meeting, we explored with trepidation the potential pilot to house clients out of county, and we sought assurance that families would not be separated against their will and

it was pleasing to note this concern was shared by yourself and officers. As it was confirmed further information on the detail of this work is required, we would be grateful to be kept informed of its progress.

In relation to the issue with private rented accommodation, we aligned this with the continued challenge of voids and it was confirmed although the challenge with supplies remains, due to the recruitment of additional operatives, officers are confident properties can now be turned around quicker. We also sought assurance that the council is purchasing properties from private landlords to address the current challenges and it was pleasing to note this avenue is being utilised by the service area.

Finally, Members were disappointed to note that the regional service for Male Domestic Abuse victims due in July 2021 has been delayed. We would like to **request** further information on the reasoning for its delay and when we can expect the service to be launched.

Recommendations to be Monitoring following this Scrutiny

The Committee makes four formal recommendation which are set out below.

As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendations are accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet’s response. If the recommendations are accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Implementation Date
To prepare for the upcoming winter months, the service area recruit a statistician (or similar) to provide accurate information on key pressures, which in turn will offer critical insight into the possible shortfalls and requirements.				

Explore more innovative ways of coping with current and future pressures by expanding the use of Occupation Therapists and other professionals where demand is high.				
More communication is done on the call for equipment, including through the continued use of social media outlets, notification on the council and hub websites, posters in hubs, liaising with Adviceline staff to make initial enquires where relevant and a letter drop targeted at relevant residents or family members.				
Conduct an overall review on how we retrieve and reallocate stock. We deem the review should focus particularly on if adequate support is provided to residents who may have heavier equipment, such as stairs lifts or hoists, redundant in their properties.				

Yours,



COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS

Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

cc. Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Jane Thomas, Director, Adults, Housing & Communities

Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities

Khalid Osman, Into Work Co-Ordinator in Housing & Communities

Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations

Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee