

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 1 November 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, Y Forsey, K Thomas and P Hourahine

In Attendance: D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser), L Davies (Governance Officer), J Harris (Strategic Director - People), J Keen (Regulatory Services Manager Environment and Community) and T McKim (Partnership Policy & Involvement Manager)

1 Declarations of Interest

None

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 26/09/2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 was approved as a true and accurate record.

3 Draft Director of Social Services Report 2018 - 2019

Attendee:

- James Harris, Strategic Director – People
- Jenny Jenkins, Service Manager - Adult & Community Services

The Strategic Director – People presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration.

2018/19 was another demanding year characterised by the maintenance of quality and standards of service delivery. The task of embedding the 2014 Social Services and Well Being Act continued and had helped positively in the re-shaping of Early Intervention and Preventative Services. This had assisted in the ongoing work to manage demand. The well-being objectives wind through all social services operations and tie closely to the Newport City Council (NCC) Corporate Plan, notably:

- To improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities.
- To enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient.
- To build cohesive & sustainable communities.

Each year financial constraints become more significant when available budgets are set against rising costs and increasing demand. There was a continuous striving to minimise costs and identify savings. In Children Services efforts have continued to concentrate on addressing the shortage of placement options and the associated costs as well as appropriately minimising the numbers of looked after children. Work in Adults Services had included the managing of demand and the building of capacity through the integration of health and social care, the Integrated Care Fund and the Transformation Fund being key enablers. As usual, there had also been a drive to minimise delayed transfers of care and these were kept at manageable levels, although there remains scope to improve. The Care

in Wales inspection reports and performance indicators demonstrate however, that the service delivered to children and adults was being maintained, a significant achievement. In addition to legislative change and financial challenges, the use and application of the Welsh Community Care and Information System (WCCIS) had been developed during the year. Partnership working had developed further with the other South East Wales Local Authorities with numerous joint initiatives maintained and developed. The integrated partnership with Barnardo's has also remained a strength with a retendering for the strategic partnership delivered by Barnardo's recently completed. The Regional Partnership Board at which the third sector, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and South East Wales Local Authorities are represented continues to be an important route for the transformation of health and social care and Newport City Council engages fully in this process. 2019/20 will prove no less challenging but social services in Newport City Council were lean, efficient and well-placed to respond.

Members asked the following:

- A Member asked for clarification on staff turnover and the movement of Social Workers within the authority. The Strategic Director for People replied explaining that it had been a challenge in the past, but turnover of staff in recent years had been low, and that all posts are currently filled. Feedback received from Social Workers was positive, saying that working in Newport holds more of a challenge, which could be an attraction to some people. Pay was less inferior than in previous years to neighbouring authorities and a thorough training pathway.
- A Member raised concerns regarding child abuse in Newport, asking if there had been a robust program in place when dealing with the challenges society currently face. The Member asked Officers for assurances that the system had not let the children down as it had done in some of the high profile towns in England. Officers replied but incidents reported in Newport were of a lower scale than those reported on in England. The Officer explained that systems and processes within the Authority's Safeguarding hub were unique and robust, sharing information with key front line professionals, holding regular conferences to discuss cases as all of the agencies are located together within the hub.
- A Member of the Committee asked if Newport had adopted a Believe Policy. Officers replied confirming that the Authority's approach is one of an assessed belief, not of a blind belief.
- A Member commented on the targets set by Welsh Government expressing concerns around the drive to reduce the number of young people in care by placing targets on returning the children to their families, and whether the Authority were still under pressure to return children home. The Officer replied explaining that in some cases the circumstances it were not right to return the child to the family and in these cases the child would not return home. The Council would not put a child in an environment where they might be harmed, other options were considered for those young people such as fostering and adoption.
- The Committee expressed concerns that Newport had seen a rise in care leavers becoming homeless. Members questioned why the figure was so disturbingly high was and did it include sofa surfers. The Officer replied explaining that it was an immense challenge compared to six/eight years ago when resources were at a higher level. Newport had more residential accommodation than any other authority in Wales. Currently homelessness was a national crisis but there had been significant work carried out in Newport working with private landlords and floating support with help to enhance and develop skills to maintain a home tenancy.

- A Member of the Committee expressed concerns regarding funding received by third sector organisations to work with the homeless in Newport but the Authority were still facing a substantial issue.
- A Member thanked the Strategic Director – People, for the positives and the targets achieved on the report. Asking for clarification on what the arrangements had been made taking the report forward to Cabinet and Council after his retirement. The Officer replied confirming that the Interim Strategic Director - People would take the report forward with support of the Interim Chief Executive, Strategic Director – Place, Head of Children and Young People Services and the Head of Adult and Community Services.
- A Member of the Committee asked Officers if the Authority had the ability to earn money from accommodating children from other Authorities. Officers replied explaining that it would not be the intention to earn money but there would be the potential. The focus would be on the achieving the correct blend of children in the home, not the financial gain. The other five Authorities in Gwent do not have the same facilities or capacity as Newport do, the intention of the Council was to develop further places.
- A Member asked for clarity on the process of identifying Adults on the edge of needing support, further enquiring whether the Authority were proactive in supporting those individuals. The Officer confirmed that unless an individual self identifies or a partner agency picks up the situation the Authority would not have sight of the issue. When a referral has been made, there would be two routes for engagement, Safeguarding Hub and the First Contact Team. Newport would then be able to identify the individual with their records to ensure support is maintained.
- Members of the Committee commented on the percentage of children seen by a registered dentist within three months of becoming looked after, asking if data could be added to the report to incorporate if a child had been registered or not. The Officer confirmed that there was an improved performance for looked after Children registered with a dentist, however the measure would require revision as the child might have seen a dentist just before becoming looked after, or may have left care before dental appointments were sourced. The figures were low due to the Authority having to disclose information that the child was looked after and registered with a GP ten working days after placement, the figures were low but were accurate.
- Committee Members committed on the revenue out-turn showing an underspend of budget, asking Officers for an explanation. Officers confirmed that whilst the position was positive there were areas of budget pressure that had been highlighted throughout most of the year, one of which was the demand led pressures within social care. Within Childrens Services, there was a significant financial pressure due to out of authority placement costs.
- A Member commented on young carers and the challenges of meeting the needs of those types of carers, currently there was not a statement to make those values clear. The resilience of the family was not always great. Friends act as a support network. Reports from schools indicate that extra support was required as pressure on staffing and have problems finding staff. The Officer replied to Members explaining that there was a challenge with resources in schools, the connection with Education does not show on this report but could be added in the future, however the issue does come up In the Performance Scrutiny Committee - People as well as Overview Management Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusion – Actions and Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Director of Social Services Annual Report and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet:

1. The Committee wished to comment on the increasing pressure from the Welsh Government to lower the number of Looked After Young People in Newport. They explained that the Cabinet Member and Officers would receive their full support if they did not meet WG targets due to the risks to the young people returning home.
2. Strategic Director – People to add further information on staff turnover within Social Services to the annual report.
3. Strategic Director – People to add further information on the Grooming/Child Exploitation Strategy to the annual report and provide the information to the Committee.
4. Strategic Director – People to add more information on Education involvement and support to the annual report.
5. The Committee found that the rise of homeless young people after leaving care was unacceptable and requested more information as a report.

4 Performance Management Strategy - Recommendations Monitoring

Attendee:

- Tracy McKim - Policy Partnership & Involvement Manager
- Howard Mason - Senior HR & OD Business Partner

The Policy Partnership & Involvement Manager presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration. The Performance Management Strategy (The Strategy) has been developed by the Business Improvement and Development Team to 'embed' a strong performance culture where everyone was aware of their contribution to the council's vision. This was the first Strategy of its kind in the Council and works to the overall mission statement. The Strategy uses 'The Golden Thread' strategic map to explain the process of how the Public Service Board's Wellbeing Plan influences everything between the Council's Corporate Plan and the work done by frontline staff. The Strategy claims to be relevant to two groups of people;

- All employees of the Council who each contribute to delivering the Council's vision through their day-to-day activities.
- All Members and managers who are responsible for assessing the Council's progress against planned objectives.

Members asked the following:

- A Member drew attention to the Clear Review (Individual Performance Management System) section of the report, asking for clarification of the percentage of constructive anonymous feedback given. The Officer confirmed that the constructive feedback is continuing to improve, however the wording around the 4% would be amended to reflect.
- Members of the Committee enquired about the Clear Review, asking if setting meetings every four weeks was too frequent, who defined the demand for four

weekly reviews and not quarterly. Does the system cover everybody in the Authority? Officers explained that for the most part the system was very robust and worked very well for full time staff, meetings generally would take between 20 minutes and 2 hours dependant to how regularly staff interact with their managers. Officers confirmed that for the Leader, Chief Executive and schools the system was slightly different.

- Members of the Committee asked for an explanation on how the reporting was monitored, asking was there a RAG Status being used, and if the system had given two-way recognition. Officers confirmed that feedback and comments were recorded. Objectives set by staff in Clear Review were linked to the service plan objectives. Tasks and actions were set between the Line Manager and the Officer, these were monitored between both Officers.
- A Member enquired if the Authority were allowing enough time in the working day to collate information, asking if it was counterproductive. The Officer responded by explaining that other forms of communication took place for staff including corridor conversations, co setting of KPI's or more formal coaching. It remained a two-way conversation between line managers and their staff. Officers confirmed that the system was paperless. The drawbacks to the system included how conversations outside of the 1-1 environment were not captured, however there was an emphasis on coaching, additional support and training, and for exceptional performance.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Performance Management Strategy – Recommendations Monitoring and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet Member as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet:

1. The Officers stated that they would seek staff feedback from those that had received anonymous feedback.

5 Local Toilet Strategy

Attendee:

- Jonathan Keen - Regulatory Services Manager Environment and Community

The Regulatory Services Manager Environment and Community presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration.

The Council are required to produce a Local Toilet Strategy by Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017: Provision of Toilets. This came into force on the 31 May 2018. The overall aim of this Strategy was to review where public toilets are currently provided in Newport and establish an action plan to ensure adequate toilet facilities are available in the future to meet the needs of the public.

Members asked the following:

- Members of the Committee expressed an interest and welcomed the strategy, stating that they would like to see a commitment from the strategy, so that residents and

visitors to Newport know about the facilities and the Council commit to keeping them open and available.

- A Member of the Committee commented on the list of toilet facilities recorded in the report, advising that there were more toilets to be added to the list mentioning Newport Centre as one of them. The Officers replied to the Committee confirming that a list of additional public toilets in Newport would be welcomed to add to the draft strategy. The Officer confirmed that Newport Centre was not happy to open all of their toilet facilities to the public.
- A Member asked the Officer to confirm timescales for the Toilet Strategy. The Officer replied explaining that strategy needed to be added to the forward work plan by the summer, going back out to public consultation before heading back to Cabinet in 2020.
- A Member of the Committee spoke about Welsh Government recognising the issues with public toilets and offering funding for private owned toilets, stating that it might be an idea for Newport to take on board. The Officer confirmed that money from the funding for that was no longer separated out, but may look at a Neutral Gender facility to save space.
- Members commented on the key points raised by Newport Access Group, agreeing that some of the points raised needed to be taken into consideration as modern electrical wheelchairs are very wide and would possibly need a double width toilet for disabled residents and visitors to the area.
- A Member expressed concerns regarding the need for a range of the following toilet facilities in the City Centre; 24-hour toilets, temporary toilets and attended toilets. It was also mentioned that a contribution could be sought from nightclubs and pubs for providing the facility.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Draft Toilet Strategy and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet Member as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet Member:

1. Updated Action Plan to be circulated to the Committee
2. The Committee requested that the final report be added to the forward work programme for July.
3. The Committee requested that a feasibility study be undertaken to assess the need for a 24hr provision for City Centre
4. The Committee commented that the Council should commit to supporting public toilets in parks.

6 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Attendees:

- Daniel Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

24 January 2020, the agenda items;

- Draft Budget and MTFP 2020/21

19 March 2020, the agenda item;

- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report
- Civil Parking Enforcement Implementation Monitoring