

Draft Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 14th March 2023

Time: 10am

Venue: Hybrid Meeting

Present: Councillors W Routley (Chair), J Cleverly, T Watkins, B Davies, P Drewett, D Jenkins, A Screen, M Al-Nuaimi.

Sally Anne Jenkins (Strategic Director for Social Services), Natalie Poyner (Head of Children Services), Joanne Llewellyn (Service Manager- Resources), Jay McCabe (Service Manager- Operations), Mary Ryan (Head of Adult Services)

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Advisor), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer), Anne Jenkins (Governance Team Leader)

1. Apologies

Councillors Bright and Pimm.

2. Declaration of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held: 28th February 2023

The minutes of meetings held **28th February 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

4. Eliminate update

The Head of Children's Services presented this report.

Questions:

The Committee asked why a not-for-profit programme was being explored now.

- The Head of Children's Service noted that the cost of children's care is high and that providers control the market. The Head of Children's Services explained that Welsh Government felt that through the move to not-for-profit money could be better reinvested. The Head of Children's Service also highlighted that the more costly provisions don't always provide a better service.

The Committee queried the definition of profit.

- The Strategic Director of Social Services explained that the Welsh Government were working on a clear definition of profit and what makes a profitable organisation. The Strategic Director for Social Services informed Committee that the team are waiting for these definitions.

The Committee agreed that significant profits shouldn't be made as well as reaffirmed the desire for a clear definition on what profits are.

The Committee asked who would finance the project.

- The Head of Children's Service informed the Committee that the Welsh Government give local councils a chance to bid for funding. The Head of Children's Service detailed that they were successful in securing a significant amount of money over the next 2 years, with £2.6 million being secured for the Eliminate programme and another £2 million secured for radical reform.

The Committee asked about children who were taken into care and placed outside of Wales, as the scheme is for Wales only.

- The Head of Children's Service explained that children in placements outside of Wales will need to be moved back to Wales.

The Committee asked how children with special requirements get their needs met.

- The Head of Children's Service explained that these requirements are considered when placing the children and that the intention was a range of provision would be developed.

The Committee asked for clarification on what ages this would affect.

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that the age range was 0-18 years old.

The Committee asked whether the Eliminate scheme include asylum seeking children.

- The Head of Children's Service detailed to the Committee that while there is a requirement to support asylum seekers, the majority of them are in the age range of 16-18.
- The Head of Children's Services informed Committee that Cambridge House is being developed to create space for unaccompanied children. The Head of Children's Services informed Committee that they were the lead in Gwent for the provision of these services and once works had been completed, they would be able to offer placements at Cambridge House for regional partners.

The Committee noted that Cambridge House was previously not fit for purpose and asked how much investment would be required to increase the standard.

- The Head of Children's Services informed Committee that capital funding from Welsh Government would be used to bring Cambridge House up to standard.

The Committee asked whether any children will be brought into Cambridge House before it was fit for purpose.

- The Head of Children's Services confirmed that children would be brought in once it was fit for purpose and not before.
- The Strategic Director confirmed that unaccompanied children had different needs such as the proximity being less of a challenge.

The Committee questioned whether due to the large investment into Cambridge House, will the space also be used to house children native to Newport as well as those unaccompanied.

- The Head of Children's Services informed the Committee that Newport is mandated by the UK Home Office to take a certain number of unaccompanied children into the city and that number would not change so the space would be required for them.

The Committee noted that this property should be maintained to a standard so that if there came a time when we don't have unaccompanied children, it would still be used for those who needed it.

The Committee asked whether the repurposing of Cambridge House was more cost effective in comparison to building new buildings.

- The Head of Children's Services noted that Cambridge House was cost effective as well as highlighting the financial support provided by the Home Office for each unaccompanied minor in Newport's care.
- The Service Manager for Resources informed the Committee that they had to focus on placing children in practical areas with the right culture, which has led to them choosing Cambridge House rather than building new.

The Committee asked who is on the national Eliminate Board and asked for a breakdown of the membership.

- The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that there were a range of entities that were represented on the Board that included but were not limited the Chief Social Worker for Wales, representatives from private and charitable providers, Social Care Wales representatives, Local Authority representatives, Care Inspectorate Wales representatives and legal representation from Welsh Government. The Strategic Director agreed to provide a fuller breakdown for Committee.

The Committee asked whether there would be enough non-profit providers to maintain services when for-profit providers left the scheme in 2026.

- The Strategic Director noted that based on the public consultation if all things go ahead, the task of the service is to make sure they are ready.
- The Strategic Director also noted the importance of ensuring placements are available as there is great concern that unregistered placements could occur.

- The Strategic Director reaffirmed that they are concerned about meeting the proposed deadline.
- The Committee asked that this item be brought back if the area were struggling in 2025 under this programme.

The Committee highlighted that there are fewer places than demanded required and were concerned about an increase in unregistered children if there were too few placements available by the required time.

- The Committee noted that placing children in unregistered places could lead to legal breaches.
- The Committee appreciated the effort to place children in the correct placements however they felt it was a surprise how many were in unregistered placements.

The Committee noted that properties had been purchased previously to return children back to Newport and asked whether this is looking to be continued.

- The Head of Children's Service informed the Committee that they are working with other providers as there are limited places able to care for children with complex needs.
- The Head of Children's Services noted that a bid for capital funding had been put in in order to renovate a building for complex need children.

The Committee asked whether other Local Authorities were doing the same as Newport.

- The Head of Children's Service noted that all counties in Wales were doing similar however Newport was doing slightly better than others

The Committee asked when a definition of profit was to be given

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that the date was unsure however they could confirm it was being worked on.

5. Registered Social Landlord Update

Questions

The Committee was concerned that there were 9000 on the waiting list which was an increase compared to last year. And asked whether properties were being built as social or affordable housing?

- The question was forwarded to the appropriate Head of Service for an answer to be provided.

6. Conclusion of Committee Reports

The Committee forwent this item as it was not applicable to the reports.

7. Scrutiny Advisor Reports

The Scrutiny Advisor informed the Committee that there were still outstanding actions that were being chased.

The Scrutiny Advisor noted that the 28th March 2023 would be the next and final meeting of the municipal calendar.