

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Gareth Sandilands (Vice Chair), Ellie Chard, Bobby Feeley, Martyn Hogg, Carol Holliday, Alan Hughes, Paul Keddie, Terry Mendies, and Andrea Tomlin.

Cabinet Lead Member for Health and Social Care – Councillor Elen Heaton attended for item 5 and 6 at the Committee's invitation.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities, Modernisation and Wellbeing (NS), Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness (AL), Service Manager, Community Support Service Cefndy (NB), Joint Head of Service for Education and Children's Service (RM), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE), Committee Administrator (KJ – Webcast), and Business Coordinator (RPJ Minutes).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hug Irving (Chair) Councillor Diane King, along with the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families. Apologies were also received from the Corporate Director: Governance and Business, Gary Williams. The Corporate Director: Social Services and Education, who was in attendance for business items 5 and 6, also undertook the Corporate Executive Team (CET) support role for the meeting.

In the Chair's absence the meeting's proceedings were chaired by the Vice-Chair.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No members declared interests of a personal, or personal and prejudicial nature in any of the business items to be transacted during the course of the meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items of an urgent nature had been raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 June 2024 were submitted. It was:

Resolved: that the minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 June 2024 be received as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Matters arising:

Page 12, 'Update on Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and Review of the Council's Financial Resilience and Sustainability – Predicted Car Parking Fees Income': the Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised that the Council's Chief Financial Officer had advised that presently it was very early in the financial year to be forecasting income over the whole of the year with any certainty. For the first few months of the financial year income levels seemed to be comparable with those of the previous year, therefore it was anticipated that the Service was on track to achieve the additional income forecast. Nevertheless, external factors such as the weather and attendance levels at large events in major towns would have an impact on car parking income. A clearer picture of predicted income figures should be available towards late autumn. Members asked to be provided with an update on car park income figures and the Service's performance to date in achieving its predicted income figures before the end of the calendar year.

5 DRAFT DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care (EH) introduced the report (previously circulated), summarising the significant increase in the need for social care services, issues over recruitment and retention to the sector, thus progress being slower and performance against key indicators having dropped because of the pressures. Focus ahead would be on the transformation agenda.

Corporate Director: Social Services and Education (NS) explained the report's production was a statutory requirement and its format and contents were prescribed by Welsh Government, therefore there were limits to how Denbighshire County Council could adapt the report. However, there would be a new format soon from Welsh Government.

Corporate Director: Social Services and Education (NS) expressed her thanks to the department, partners and informal carers for their continued hard work. The team continued to operate as a blended service with Education and Social Care and had joint heads of service and a joint budget and service plan.

The Chair then opened the discussion out for questions.

Responding to members' questions the officers advised:

- Recruitment and retention throughout the report was cited as a challenge, particularly in relation to Children's Services. The difficulties faced here were not new for this reporting period the issue has been reported to scrutiny numerous times. The department had done further specific targeted work, looking at the reasons provided in exit interviews, developing the staff currently employed, and continuously promoting the flexible working offer and lobbying nationally for pay increases to the sector. However this was a national issue, Social Work was now undersubscribed and therefore not enough newly qualified entrants were coming in to the profession. Similarly with Mental Health, there was a national shortage of professionals in the service. Denbighshire was looking at the current structure within the team

and allocating work to free up Approved Mental Health Practitioner's (AMPH's) to focus on the work they were statutorily required to undertake.

- Corporate Director: Social Services and Education advised that she and fellow members of the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru were continually lobbying the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Local Government Association (LGA), both UK & Welsh Governments and others with respect of better pay for care sector workers, including parity of terms and conditions with National Health Service (NHS) employees.
- The report was onerous, Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness (AL) was working with Welsh Government on the new format for future annual reports, however it was uncertain how much of their input would be taken onboard. The new format should hopefully be better, it would include a performance section with data and would separate Adult and Children Services information more clearly. The Case Studies provided within the report were well received and provided useful illustrations of the complexities entailed in providing the right types of services to suit the individuals.
- Digital inclusion was discussed and the importance of reaching out to older residents and those that were digitally excluded was discussed. The 'Ageing Well in Denbighshire' scheme played a crucial role in this, especially in rural Denbighshire. 'Digital Confidence' was another scheme aimed at building digital confidence, this programme was funded by Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) monies.
- Complex Needs, the pressures continued to increase, older population presenting to residential care now on average were 82 – 83 years old and were using these services when families could no longer provide the required support, therefore their needs were greater when entering care. In Children's Services since the pandemic there had been an increase in complex mental health and behavioural mental health. A lot of work was ongoing with partners, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Local Integrated Family Team (LIFT), Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) Mental Health Services, Police etc. focussing on early intervention and supporting families earlier. Regular Multi Agency Team (MAT) meetings with schools were held, also the Team Around the Family (TAF) approach was utilised, and lots of sharing of information and data took place to support effective collaborative working.
- That there had been a dip in performance, this was due to the complexities of need with which individuals were presenting which meant that assessments were taking longer, however the service wanted quality driven assessments undertaken and therefore these took more time. Recruitment and retention was another factor which contributed to the decline in performance, as well as a new system of recording data which meant it was difficult to compare one year to the next.
- The report illustrated that only six complaints had been received against the Service, which seemed an extremely low number. The complaints procedure was a statutory process defined by Welsh Government. The Denbighshire County Council Complaints Department was highly regarded and had been approached by a number of other authorities on how to deal with complaints in an effective manner. The department's response rate to complaints was extremely efficient.

- Homelessness was within the Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness' (AL) remit, however the requirements for the Director of Social Services Annual Report did not necessitate information on homelessness to be included in the report. Within the finance section for information £4m of the £59m Adult Services budget was for the provision of homelessness services, the remainder of Homelessness Services were funded via grant funding. Aged 16-17 homeless young people formed part of the Children's Service Budget so is not included in this figure.
- Transitioning from Children to Adult Services was all about forward planning and early intervention. For children with disabilities, Denbighshire County Council had an excellent onward planning process. However, for Children with Mental Health entering Adult Mental Health services the department were experiencing some pressures. Care Leavers if in education stayed within the service until they were age 21 up to 25. There was bespoke transition, work with homelessness, onward housing and what was available could be problematic, therefore the Service was currently looking at ways to develop support within the home. For 18-year-olds in residential care there was a step-down transition out to supported accommodation. For residential and fostering there was a programme called "when I'm ready" which meant that they did not have to leave just because they had turned 18. A lot of pathway planning, managing money and budget skills were key aspects for this age group.
- Not for Profit agenda – Denbighshire's Head of Children's Services served on the All-Wales Directors of Children's Services board for this particular programme as its Chair. There were a lot of unanswered questions around this Bill, a number of questions had been submitted to Welsh Government in relation to it. Whilst the intent of the 'Not for Profit' agenda was commendable it would in reality be extremely challenging, and it was still not clear where exemptions would be made.
- Micro providers had filled a lot of gaps in domiciliary care provision in the county, it was regarded as a valued offer by Denbighshire County Council as the services provided by micro-providers stopped people requiring statutory services by helping them maintain their independence. Each micro-provider could have up to four people for whom they could provide support and care. In total micro providers provided care and support for circa 200 residents, some of which was self-funded. Denbighshire, recruited, trained and supported Micro-providers, however they were very much a private entity, self-employed individuals.
- Global Resettlement Team was funded through the Home Office via funding for specific Resettlement Programmes for citizens from Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. Financial support for Ukrainian citizens was diminishing, however, there were still a lot of Ukrainian families living with host families across the county and they continued to receive funding via the Home Office. The Ukrainian Welcome Hub had now closed, with all families being accommodated in more permanent housing solutions. Denbighshire had a limited number of Afghan and Syrian families coming through each year, numbers were very small. With respect of Asylum Seekers, in 2023/24 each local authority were given an allocation of homes that could be used to accommodate asylum seekers. The provider for the Home Office approached the Council with properties they were proposing to be used for

this purpose and how they would be brought up to standard. Funding for these was a one-off amount per bed space. There were currently three or four families housed in Denbighshire and the Global Resettlement Team worked closely with North Wales Police (NWP) and Denbighshire's Public Protection Department in relation to Asylum Seekers. No care funding is used for the resettlement programmes.

- Looking to the near future, the position would be challenging, Social Services were not immune from significant budget savings, performance would decline in some areas, the support offer would probably need to be less, however every effort would be made to maintain service delivery for the most vulnerable.

At the conclusion of an in-depth discussion the Committee thanked the Director for a comprehensive report which provided an honest account of the Services' performance, along with the pressures it encountered in delivering quality services to the County's residents during austere financial times.

The Committee:

Resolved: subject to the above observations -

(i) to receive the report and endorse it as a clear account of the Council's Social Care Services' performance in 2023/24; and

(ii) to acknowledge the financial and resource pressures within which the Services were currently expected to operate.

The Committee adjourned for a break at 11.20am and re-convened at 11.30am.

6 CEFNDY YEAR END REPORT 2023/24

Cabinet Lead Member – Councillor Elen Heaton introduced the report (previously circulated) and attendees for this item, Corporate Director: Communities, Modernisation and Wellbeing (NS), Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness (AL), and Service Manager - Community Support Service Cefndy (NB).

Cefndy organised a site visit for this committee last year which was well received and therefore the majority of members well versed on what Cefndy offered, the Chair therefore opened the discussion for questions.

Responding to the questions and points raised the Lead Member and officers advised that:

- Despite the challenging financial climate there had been an increase in sales, in a competitive global market and sales were on target for next financial year.
- Cefndy had overcome significant challenges such as supply chain disruptions, heavy inflation pressures, Brexit. The management team were now looking at new products, product development being considered working through older designs first.
- with regard to the enterprise's carbon footprint, it was unable to have solar panels on the building due to the tree line, however, it had incorporated LED lights, introduced a four day working week to reduce on utility bills which had, saved 15%. All new equipment had a better carbon footprint.

- with respect of long term viability, there was a need to start looking at career progression within Cefndy. Succession planning was on Denbighshire's radar, it would support people to develop their skill sets further. The services provided at Cefndy were unique, they were not replicated elsewhere so it did present some challenges to recruit. Engineering college was now open next to Cefndy and therefore work experience and other opportunities would hopefully come through the courses on offer there.
- there were currently no plans to set up an Advisory Board, this would be reviewed as part of the Transformation Agenda, possibly look at having a Task and Finish Group which could include Councillors. However, Cefndy was a Council-run service therefore Councillors could be as involved as they wished with the service.
- Officers would be more than willing to arrange another visit for all councillors (in small groups) to Cefndy.

At the conclusion of the discussion Committee members stated that it would be beneficial to see a good news story posted on Denbighshire Today and on the Council's social media platforms about Cefndy, what it manufactured, its dedicated workforce and its benefits to the community. They also requested that future business plans be shared with them.

Following a comprehensive discussion, the Committee:

Resolved:

- (i) subject to the above observations, and having analysed the performance of Cefndy in relation to its financial, business and social well-being objectives during 2023/24, to receive the report and endorse the progress made in stabilising the enterprise and planning for its future viability;**
- (ii) that arrangements be made to invite elected members (in manageable sized groups) to visit the Cefndy facility to see the work undertaken there and how it benefits the well-being of its workforce; and**
- (iii) that a further report on Cefndy's performance during the 2024/25 financial year be presented to the Committee in twelve months' time.**

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) which sought the Committee to review its programme of future work.

The Committee was advised that the deferral of the presentation of the progress report on Christ the Word School from the current meeting's business agenda to November's meeting had led to the Committee having too many items listed for discussion on that meeting's business agenda to facilitate a fair airing for each subject.

As some of the items listed for November's meeting were time sensitive members suggested holding a morning and afternoon session, or two meetings on separate days, to transact the required business. However, officers advised that pressures on the Council's committee meetings timetable and staffing resources to support additional sessions/meetings would make it extremely difficult to arrange and support the holding of two meetings/sessions within the same month.

A suggestion was therefore made to enquire with the Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee to see whether that committee could assume the role of monitoring the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, as members felt that the Strategy was more closely aligned to Communities Scrutiny Committee's remit than that of Performance Scrutiny Committee. If Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake this role it would render Performance Scrutiny Committee's workload more manageable for the remainder of the calendar year. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator agree to enquire on the Committee's behalf.

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) was scheduled for 16 September and therefore any requests for items to be scrutinised should be submitted to the Scrutiny Co-ordinator on the form attached at Appendix 2 to the report well in advance of that meeting. Appendix 3 contained the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme for members' information whilst Appendix 4 gave an overview of the progress to date in relation to the Committee's recommendations from its previous meeting.

The Committee:

Resolved: subject to the above -

(i) that, with a view to alleviating pressures on the Committee's time and forward work programme, a formal request be made to Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider the forthcoming progress report on Denbighshire's Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan; and

(ii) to confirm the Committee's forward work programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

Meeting concluded at 12.05pm.