

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 DECEMBER 2023

Minutes of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 7 December 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Carol Ellis, Hilary McGuill, David Mackie, and Debbie Owen

APOLOGY: Councillor Gladys Healey

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Dave Hughes and Paul Johnson

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Gina Maddison (for Councillor Linda Thomas)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning; Senior Manager Children and Workforce and Commissioning Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Hilary McGuill declared that she had recently used Care and Repair and Councillor Marion Bateman declared that she had recently used the services of NEWCES.

32. MINUTES

Councillor Ellis referred to page 8 of the minutes where Councillor Paul Johnson asked for the recommendation to be slightly amended and asked if Members were given a list of the services that were a requirement by Welsh Government, as not everyone would have been aware of what they were. She explained that she did not see information in the papers and was not present at the meeting and stated that if a recommendation was to be changed then Members should have had the required information. The Facilitator advised that it was an invitation from Councillor Johnson to Members to bring forward any ideas following the meeting. The Chief Officer (Social Services) confirmed that in context to the supported proposals that were reported to Committee last time, Members were invited to suggest ideas about budget savings across all Scrutiny committees but he understood Councillor Ellis' point that Social Services was a very complex service and largely responded to statutory responsibilities making areas of savings hard to find, but that it was good to be open to any suggestions. In response to Councillor Bateman who agreed with Councillor Ellis' comments, the Chair asked the Chief Officer to give further information on statutory and non-statutory work. The Chief Officer advised that a significant majority of Social Services provision was statutory and suggested that at a future meeting, before the

budget discussions were finished, clarification would be given as to which service areas were fully statutory, which Members welcomed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2023 were approved as moved and seconded by Councillors Dave Mackie and Mel Buckley.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

33. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Social Care & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking as set out in the report and advised Members that the questions they had suggested had been forwarded to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for consideration prior to the January meeting. She invited Members to put forward any further items to be included on the Forward Work Programme.

Councillor Bateman suggested that a manager should also be present at the January meeting to explain and possibly demonstrate 'E-Consult'. She added that telephone consultations were not suitable for everyone and pointed out that other things could be picked up face-to-face rather than by telephone. Councillor Maddison agreed and added that there were many older people who did not have access to computers/internet/mobile phones. She regarded E-Consult as age discrimination and wanted BCUHB to re-assure members that older people, who were not on-line, could have a personal consultation. The Facilitator confirmed that E-Consult was on the list of questions to be put to BCUHB at the January meeting and that she would forward the additional comments to BCUHB, however she could not demand that one attended.

Councillor McGuill requested that when the Out of County Placements were reviewed that the progress that had been made in the Council's own residential establishments be tied in. The Chief Officer (Social Services) agreed and said that they would do that when the item was considered at the joint meeting in June 2024.

Councillor Ellis raised concerns about people in A&E side wards not being given food or drink, sometimes for days, and wanted the matter raising with BCUHB at the January meeting which the Chair said would be noted.

The Facilitator referred to Action Tracking and advised that a couple of items were still ongoing and that she would respond to Members when she had more information. She confirmed that Out of County Placements had been added to the Forward Work Programme to be considered at the joint meeting on 27th June and that the previous comment made by Councillor McGuill would be covered.

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Dave Mackie and Debbie Owen.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

34. COUNCIL PLAN 2023-24 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the report on the overall mid-year performance situation across the whole Council, with the table in section 1.04 covering all portfolios. He pointed out that the appendix was most relevant to this Committee and that the relevant sub area was Personal and Community Well-being which had an action 'RAG' status of 90% green and 10% red and for Well-being a RAG status of 85% green and 15% red. He highlighted some measures as set out in the appendices.

In response to an observation by Councillor Debbie Owen, the Chief Officer said that some priorities were supported by more than one portfolio and even though it was not a Social Services responsibility, the overall area of a well-connected, safe and clean local environment did sit under this the area of performance.

Councillor McGuill questioned in-house care and the recruitment of staff. The Chief Officer explained that the in-house provision covered a host of services, many of which were regulated and therefore needed the staffing required to provide the service and that the regulated inspections had confirmed that they had sufficient staff to provide good quality services in those areas. However, he did not have the exact number of vacancies but would provide them after the meeting. He added that recruitment had improved since the pandemic.

In response to Councillor McGuill's second question concerning children coming out of care and the housing situation, the Chief Officer explained that he did not have the specific information about care leavers but agreed that it was a concerning area which they were actively considering. He stated that homelessness had issues outside of Flintshire and nationally it was a real concern and agreed that she was right to identify. He added that the portfolio had joint meetings with Housing and that accommodation for care leavers would be a priority for a future joint meeting.

In response to Councillor Mackie, the Chief Officer explained that the Direct Payment target was for the year but was applied to this period as it was a percentage and the performance was for the period and not for the full year. He agreed with his point about the 12.7% allocation for Direct Payments in older people but stated that it reflected the situation nationally due to the nature of support provided for older people. However, some of it was not long term like other categories and it tended to attract a lower percentage of people wanting direct payments compared to people with life-long disabilities who had more direct payments.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Mel Buckley and Tina Claydon.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members support the levels of progress and confidence in the achievement of priorities as detailed within the Council Plan 2023/28 for delivery within 2023/24;
- (b) That Members support the overall performance against Council Plan 2023/24 performance indicators/measures; and
- (c) That Members are assured by the explanations given for the areas of underperformance.

35. SOCIAL CARE COMMISSIONING

The Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning advised that this report had been brought to Committee to report the activity for the North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement and the framework that was under development, stating that commissioning was a large part of the service provided by Social Services.

The Commissioning Manager gave background to the report before going into detail about the Domiciliary Care Agreement stating that Commissioning was a cyclical activity to assess the needs of its local population for care and support services. She explained that the North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement was a project between the six local authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and that it had been in place since 2018 and was due to end on 31 March 2025 and that work had been started to complete the cycle. The agreement was a list of providers who had demonstrated their ability and competence to deliver domiciliary care that allowed them to purchase placements. The current Agreement covered Domiciliary Care Services for adults only but due to the success, the re-tendering would be expanded to include Domiciliary Care Services for Children / Young People / Adults and their Families / carers and older people.

In response to Councillor McGuill's question, the Commissioning Manager confirmed that there were 13 registered Children and Young People Residential Homes which included new in-house homes. On the number of current Out of County Placements for children, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) replied that there were usually around 40 children in residential care of which some would be based in the 13 homes within Flintshire, but gave assurance that all the children were in registered homes and that the out of county data would be provided.

Councillor Owen questioned the difference between registered and non-registered places. The Commissioning Manager advised that the difference was that registered places were registered and Inspected by the Social Services Inspectorate - Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). She gave an example of unregistered as Micro Carers stating that even though they were delivering a regulated service, there was no requirement for them to be registered as long as they were only delivering a service to no more than four individuals.

Councillor Mackie questioned Welsh Government's requirement of service providers not being allowed to make a profit and asked if it had any effects or impact on Flintshire and if there were any concerns. In response, the Commissioning Manager said that it was having an effect and impact and that to date the focus had been on Children's Services although ambitions were to extend that across. She explained that some providers were taking the approach to step away from services in Wales as a result of the initiative which included a service that had already closed in Flintshire, whilst other providers were taking a positive look at it and converting their business model into non-profit organisation. She added that she did not see it as a negative as they had a plan in place giving the example of the development of in-house services to mitigate some of the exits from the market. Her thoughts were that nationally there was a fear that the Welsh Government's initiative was going to impact negatively on the sector which was already in crisis.

The Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning added that the changes were to come into force in 2027 and that conversations had already started with all of their care providers and through members support the provision of in-house residential services was something that the Council has been pro-active with.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Hilary McGuill and seconded by Councillor Debbie Owen.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members note the work of the contracts and commissioning team and the number of services they support and develop both in Flintshire and out of county; and
- (b) That Members note the planning work being undertaken for the new regional domiciliary care framework agreement needed to replace the existing framework which runs to 31st March 2025.

FOR INFORMATION

The Committee were shown a video showcasing innovative practice and excellence across Flintshire Social Services.

36. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.27 pm)

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Chair