

## HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, I.R. Buckley, C.M. Cowpe, R.E. Godfrey, S. Lloyd-Selby, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman, C. Stallard and N.C. Thomas.

Also present: Councillors C.P. Franks, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 18 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

### 19 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Councillor N.C. Thomas be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal year.

### 20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors C.A. Cave and A.M. Collins.

### 21 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### 22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 – Performance Evaluation Inspection of Vale of Glamorgan Social Services Update and Agenda Item 6 – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Scrutiny Recommendation Tracking 2023/24 and Proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule 2024/25. The nature of her interest

was Personal as she had been appointed as an independent member of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board nominated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

### 23 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION INSPECTION OF VALE OF GLAMORGAN SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE (DSS) –

The Director of Social Services presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide Committee with an update regarding the progress in delivering actions to fulfil the identified areas of improvement determined as part of the performance evaluation of Social Services that took place in January 2023.

The Director advised that the January 2023 inspection was framed around the following principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (The 2014 Act): People – voice and control, Prevention, Well-being, and Partnerships, and that the CIW findings were separated by ‘Adult’ and ‘Children and Young People’ Services. However, objectives in relation to ‘Resource Management and Safeguarding’ were also threaded through-out the findings.

The current context for delivering social services was very challenging and this was recognised by CIW through their inspection. They recognised the pandemic recovery and cost of living crisis as the context within which social services was working and the resultant high levels of demand and increased complexity of people’s needs.

The Director added that, whilst the report focussed on the ‘areas for improvement’ the Performance Evaluation Inspection report also identified many ‘strengths’ which were not part of the report presented to Committee. Care Inspectorate Wales’s summary and overall findings reflected positively upon the work of Social Services staff, their managers, and corporate colleagues.

In conclusion, the Director highlighted that the identified ‘areas for improvement’ were transferred into the Social Services Reshaping Board’s action plan and had been followed up on a quarterly basis. An extract of the action plan was attached at Appendix 1 of the report which demonstrated progress made by quarter and was last updated at the end of March 2024. Overall, 6 actions were ‘complete’, 14 ‘complete with ongoing monitoring’ and 4 still ‘in progress’. The ‘in progress’ actions all indicated, despite not yet being complete, that progress was still being made. These actions would continue to be part of the Social Services Reshaping Board’s action plan in 24/25 and progress would continue to be monitored through that mechanism.

Following the Director’s presentation, Councillor Cowpe brought to the attention of the Committee a series of concerns that they had previously raised via email with the Director prior to the meeting. The concerns could be summarised as follows:

- Report Appendix 1, 1.3, CIW Evidence of Need – Funding Disputes - The progress meeting with Welsh Government to assess progress during Quarter 3 (October - December 2023) had been cancelled and had not yet been rearranged despite a significant passage of time.
- Appendix 1, 8.1, CIW Evidence of Need – Demand for Preventative Services –

For Quarter 3, the Vale Parenting Service (VPS) waiting list was at 4 weeks, however, for Quarter 4 (January – March 2024) the waiting list had increased to 10 – 12 weeks and it was unclear from the report why the waiting list numbers had increased.

For further context, Councillor Cowpe also quoted a response that they had received from the Head of Children and Young People Services in relation to their earlier email forwarded to the Director on the topic of an increase in the waiting list for VPS and how the service were addressing the waiting list. The quote being “a move away from group delivery due to no or limited take up by parents. Moving to a focus on one to one support will reduce the time taken to organise group sessions and means more parents will be supported.” Councillor Cowpe expressed their concern with relation to the emphasis given around group parenting sessions offered on a one to one basis, as although some parents would likely want a one to one session there would not be enough resources within the service to accommodate this and also that families that attended group sessions would often make other connections to build on their support network. Therefore, Councillor Cowpe was concerned by the way the response was written as it appeared that the Council’s only approach was to provide support on a one to one basis.

Councillor Cowpe also highlighted a second response from the Head of Children and Young People Services which referred to the development of an online parenting padlet, working in partnership with Welsh Government to share the “Parenting Give it Time” resources, and shared their concern in relation to individuals who did not have digital access and would therefore be unable to access the resource.

Finally, Councillor Cowpe raised a third quote from the response received via email from the Head of Children and Young People Services in relation to the recent recruitment to two posts which will reduce the VPS waiting list from 60 to 30 and that start dates were still pending, however, most likely to be around June/July 2024. Councillor Cowpe subsequently queried if there were delays in the recruitment process.

In response, the Director of Social Services advised that the funding disputes meeting with Welsh Government had been cancelled by Welsh Government due to sickness of a Welsh Government Officer and not a Vale of Glamorgan Officer. The Head of Adult Services for the Vale of Glamorgan had since rearranged the meeting.

The Head of Children and Young People Services then addressed Councillor Cowpe’s concerns in relation to VPS waiting lists and began by stating that there had been no change in the eligibility criteria for the service, therefore, the increase related to an increase in demand for the service.

In relation to Councillor Cowpe’s concerns around recruitment, there had been no delay in going to advertisement or interview for the aforementioned posts, however, the Vale of Glamorgan Council was required to make all the necessary checks and references for the individuals who had been offered the positions which was standard employment practice and individuals would also need to work notice periods with their current employers.

The move towards the development of an online parenting padlet was a national initiative with an objective to increase access to parenting resources. Demographic data showed an increase in families wishing to access resources digitally using personal devices such as laptops and mobile phones. However, resources would also be available in hard copy on request.

To provide further context on the previous advice provided to Councillor Cowpe, the Head of Children and Young People Services added that in terms of parenting group support, the patterns and trends that had been previously seen by the service demonstrated that families wished to move away from group work which was evidenced by families not turning up for the sessions and therefore spaces and related venues not being utilised. Therefore, the Council wished to move to a model that was more desirable to the service users. Some other local authorities had also moved to digital only resources, however, that was not the intention of the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Head of Service also added that there were currently two parenting groups in operation within the Vale of Glamorgan that were aligned to Vale of Glamorgan schools. It was important for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to maximise its resources and the move to a more one to one offer had not been a quick decision and the Council was ensuring that it retained an appropriate brand model.

In response, Councillor Cowpe advised that they did not wish the group work to be lost and noted that it often took a while for a group to establish itself through promotion and word of mouth. Therefore, the Councillor requested that officers look at the papers provided in order to make sure that emphasis was placed in the right place within the document to ensure that the document read as officers intended.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Cowpe then referred to the fact that Welsh Government had reduced funding for the VPS service and therefore queried what the Vale of Glamorgan Council was doing to mitigate this as there was an obvious increase in need. In response, the Head of Children and Young People Services advised that the Council had been in receipt of an additional parenting grant for the last two financial years and that in the current financial year, it had seen a reduction in the grant funding. However, it was relevant to note that other grant funding streams had been protected. Councillor Cowpe thanked officers for the advice and stated that financial information should also be provided within the report.

In response, the Director of Social Services noted that the report before Committee was not of a financial nature and therefore the relevant financial information would be provided to Committee as part of its regular financial reports. The Chair of the Committee then also noted that financial matters could be discussed at the Committee's Budget Working Group.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby then commented on the fact that the way in which the information was being presented, over a quarterly basis, was helpful to demonstrate progress being made and then expressed a concern over feedback received in relation to Children and Young People Services and contact with social workers. Advice had been given that steps were now being taken to improve, however, the Councillor questioned whether there were any positive signs that the steps were working and also how was progress was being monitored.

In response, the Head of Children and Young People Services shared the concern in relation to the feedback received from service users in terms of making contact with the service and offered reassurance that within all service teams there was a clear standard on expectations when dealing with enquiries, advertising methods of contact as well as an 'on-duty' facility so that social workers could always be contacted. Service users had not been resurveyed on experience of contacting the service but there was no indication that the matter had not be addressed. Officers recognised that levels of communication were not always perfect. However, the Council had ensured that expectations were clear on the methods and information available for communicating with the service being mindful that officers would not always be immediately available but would ensure that calls were returned when able as per written standards that were now available across the division.

As a supplementary point, Councillor Lloyd-Selby then referred to the pilot run by the CLA and placements team operating a direct line to their duty officer in the first quarter April to June 2023 and questioned the outcomes of the pilot. To which, the Head of Children and Young People Services advised that the outcomes had been positive and had led to the aforementioned arrangements being embedded within all service teams ensuring that an officer was always available to contact. Therefore, service officers had a clear expectation on the follow up processes as well as the 'on-duty' arrangements to add further resilience.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby also raised a number of queries for the Head of Adult Services, however, due to technical difficulties the officer was not able to respond. Therefore, it was agreed that the following points be responded to in writing by the Head of Adult Services following the meeting:

- Advocacy Gateway Recommission in 2024 – It was early days but were officers confident and had it been evidenced that the increase in demand was being met?
- Report Appendix 1, 1.2, Carers Assessment of Need – what was the level of take up for Carer assessments which could be used as an indication as to how proactive officers were being in terms of offering the assessment?
- Report Appendix 1, 1.3, Funding disputes - in relation to a persons eligible needs being met due to a dispute between the local authority and the local health board resulting in a case of a carer having to find a significant package of care in the interim, were there any other examples of this being the case?

The Chair then raised a recommendation that the progress report be brought back to Committee in 12 months time and, following a query from the Director in relation to whether the future report would include actions that had been completed, the Vice-Chair stated that some of the identified areas of improvement marked as complete were stated as 'complete with ongoing monitoring' and therefore, progress in delivering actions to fulfil the identified areas of improvement marked as 'completed with ongoing monitoring' and 'in progress' within the associated action plan should be brought back to the Committee.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

## RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress against the identified areas of improvement developed by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), as set out in the update report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further update on the Council’s response to the CIW recommendations within the Performance Evaluation Report be provided to the Committee in 12 months’ time.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the update report, as requested by Committee in May 2023, regarding the progress in delivering actions to fulfil the identified areas of improvement determined as part of the performance evaluation of Social Services that took place in January 2023.
- (2) To ensure that Committee is aware of the progress in delivering actions to fulfil the identified areas of improvement marked as ‘complete with ongoing monitoring’ and ‘in progress’ within the associated action plan.

#### 24 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2023/24 AND PROPOSED ANNUAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2024/25 (DCR) –

On behalf of the Chair, the Democratic Services Officer presented the report to advise Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that all actions under Appendices A and B were marked with a ‘completed’ status and that no reports had been slipped from the 2023-24 municipal year on the Committee’s Forward Work Programme. Therefore, the Committee was in a good position to progress into the 2024-25 municipal year.

Since publication of the report before Committee, the Officer advised that some minor alterations to the Committee’s Forward Work Programme had been suggested as follows:

- That both the Annual and Mid-year Corporate Safeguarding Reports be slipped by one meeting cycle to accommodate the related references being considered by Cabinet a little later than originally anticipated, and
- That the “Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board (next 5 years) Joint Area Plan” report, as set out in June on the Committee’s Forward Work Programme, be consolidated with the “Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board Update” report to be received in January 2025, as it was no longer deemed necessary by officers to have two separate reports.

The Officer then drew attention to additional recommendations set out in the report in relation to establishing the membership of both the Leisure Centre Working Group and Budget Working Group associated with the Committee. The recommendations were timely given that the Committee Membership for the 2024-25 municipal year had since been established at the recent Annual Meeting of the Council.

Therefore, the Committee was requested to agree the status of the recommendation actions listed in Appendices A and B to the report, approve the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme for uploading to the public website as included at Appendix D to the report subject to minor alterations as advised and agree the membership of both Working Groups for the 2024-25 municipal year.

Following the Officer's presentation, both Councillors Godfrey and Cowpe indicated that they wished to be included in future arrangements for the Leisure Centre Working Group and it was subsequently agreed that Councillor Godfrey take up the vacant seat on the Budget Working Group replacing Councillor Fisher.

It was established that all other Members of both the Leisure Centre Working Group and the Budget Working Group were returning Members on the Committee and the Members indicated that they wished to remain on the relevant Groups.

In conclusion, the Chair noted that a special meeting of the Committee had been called for Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 in relation to a Call In item received and that the relevant papers would be available to the Committee imminently.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A and B to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 (Appendix C), in the context of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 content, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25, attached at Appendix D, be approved and uploaded to the Council's website subject to the following amendments being made prior to publication:
  - Both the Annual and Mid-year Corporate Safeguarding Reports being slipped to subsequent months in line with the related references from Cabinet being received.
  - The "Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board (next 5 years) Joint Area Plan" (June) be consolidated with the "Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board Update" report, to be received in January 2025.

(4) T H A T Councillors C.A. Cave, J.E. Charles, C.M. Cowpe, R.E. Godfrey, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman, C. Stallard and N.C. Thomas be appointed to the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee Leisure Centre Working Group for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

(5) T H A T Councillors G.M. Ball, C.A. Cave, J.E. Charles, R.E. Godfrey, J.M. Norman, and N.C. Thomas be appointed to the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee Budget Working Group for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report to maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.

(2) To align with section 7.6 of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities Protocol.

(3) For public information.

(4) In preparation for future arrangements in relation to Leisure Centre Visits following Committee Membership as agreed at the 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 Council Annual Meeting.

(5) In preparation for future arrangements in relation to Budget Group meetings following Committee Membership as agreed at the 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 Council Annual Meeting.