

JOINT COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23rd JULY 2015

***(NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE COMMITTEES
AT THEIR NEXT MEETING)***

Present: Councillor D.M. Cundy (Chair)
Councillor G. Thomas (Chair)

Councillors: Community Scrutiny Committee
J.M. Charles, , W.R.A. Davies, J.K. Howell, H.I. Jones, J. Owen, H.B.
Shepardson, E.G. Thomas, G.B. Thomas, J. Thomas

Councillors: Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee
S.M. Allen, S.M. Caiach I.W. Davies, T.T. Defis, P.M. Edwards, W.T.
Evans, K. Madge, J.S. Williams

Councillor A.P. Cooper – Substitute for Councillor J. Williams
Councillor J. James – Substitute for Councillor E. Morgan
Councillor A.W. Jones – Substitute for Councillor T. Devichand

Also in attendance:

Councillor L.D. Evans – Executive Board Member (EBM) for Housing
Councillor J. Tremlett – Executive Board Member (EBM) for Social Care & Health

Also present:

**Councillor J. Jones – Executive Board Member (EBM) for Environmental & Public
Protection**

The following officers were in attendance:

Mr. J. Morgan – Director of Community Services
Mr. A. Maynard – Head of Mental Health & Learning Disabilities
Mr. R. Staines – Head of Housing & Public Protection
Mr. J. Morgan – Housing Services Manager
Mr. D. Owen – Locality Manager (Llanelli)
Mr. J. Willis – Housing Services Manager (Advice & Options)
Ms. B. Dolan – Senior Consultant

Observing:

Mrs. H. Smith – Executive Support Manager, Communities
Mr. A. Passenger – Standards Officer (Fair Trading)

Venue: County Hall Chamber, Carmarthen (10:00am – 12:55pm)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

It was unanimously resolved to appoint Councillor G. Thomas as chair for items 1 – 5 on the agenda and Councillor D.M. Cundy as chair for item 6.

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2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.L. Davies, T. Devichand, D.J.R. Llewellyn, S. Matthews, E. Morgan, and J. Williams.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor M. Gravell, EBM for Regeneration & Leisure.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

5. PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

The joint Committee received a presentation which provided an opportunity for consultation on the long-term strategy for services for Older People. It was advised that 390 responses had been received since the launch of the consultation to date. The Committee's views would form part of the overall submission to the Executive Board on 28th September 2015

The following issues were raised:

Observations were made about the need to look at different models of delivery for aspects of overall services for older people, the transient nature of some local communities, older people moving into the county to retire as well as the fact that people are living longer and many remain active and healthy. The Director agreed that the profile of older people has changed significantly from when services were originally established. There was now a greater degree of economic independence for many older people which allowed a greater range of active choices. He cited day centre provision which in some locations operated at 50% capacity as older people no longer wanted this model of service. There was also variability in provision depending on who made the assessment as well as where. The funding needed to provide existing services was unsustainable and therefore radical changes were required to how and what was delivered in some service areas.

In response to concerns about shrinking local government budgets, the Director stated that If Welsh Government decided to protect education and schools going forward, this would put other services under even greater pressure and significantly diminish flexibility. There was however an option to develop further support for community provision utilising comparatively small amounts and with help from local town and community councils. It was essential to become more creative, particularly in rural areas.

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Comments were made about private sector provision and the need for effective monitoring and quality assurance of any provision commissioned by the Authority. The Director agreed with latter as essential and also expressed the view of retaining a mixed economy as he felt this would be more secure. It was however a matter for full Council to decide.

The methodology used for the consultation was questioned as it was felt more direct questions had been omitted that the public would wish to answer. The level of responses to date was also viewed as relatively low. The Director advised that a lot of thought and work had gone into preparing the consultation. The problem with direct questions was that they shaped the response. This was the first stage of the consultation and it was appropriate to have a very open dialogue with the public and members on how to build this policy. The second stage would be to action ideas arising from the results. He urged members to encourage their residents to respond, emphasising that this was about developing services into the future.

It was asked if anything proactive was being done about progressing not for profit social enterprises within the services. The Director stated that a trading company social enterprise model was one of the options to explore for some services. The model could be more entrepreneurial, allow expansion and reduce costs. A business case would need to be developed however there was merit in creating a vibrant mix of provision. It could also be a means of getting capital investment for care homes provision some of which were not economically viable due to their size. He would welcome a political steer from the Committee and assured it that any business case would consider the pros and cons of multiple options as well as the right process to come to a decision.

Concerns were expressed about the forecast increase in dementia in the county, factors influencing this such as isolation, the need for effective diagnosis and primary care services as well as the importance of respite for carers. The Director agreed that although numbers of those with dementia were relatively low, the level of care needed was significant. 70% of day centres attendees had some level of dementia and the centres had not been designed to deal with complex needs. Dementia residential care was the biggest growth area as sufferers at advanced stages would require it. The EBM for Social Care & Health reminded the Committee that an all member seminar to raise awareness and understanding of dementia had been arranged for the autumn.

Observations were made about separate social care and health budgets which could leave clients in the middle of different funding streams for continuing care. The Director advised that Hywel Dda Health Board had agreed to consider whether it was viable to pool budgets for older people services although there were constraints and complexities in many areas. He cited WG rules which capped charges for all community care packages at £55 per week but not residential care which cost £500 - £600 per week.

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Comments were made about investigating options for cross boundary working in rural areas where services like domiciliary care are difficult and expensive to provide. The Director agreed that this was a positive option to explore in areas like Llandovery bordering with rural South West Powys.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the Executive Board that:

- 5.1 The Communities Department investigates developing a business case for using not for profit or social enterprise models for delivering aspects of services for older people.**
- 5.2 The Communities Department investigates which aspects of Primary, Community and Social Care provision would be able to and benefit from pooling the budgets of NHS and Social Care to deliver a more cohesive, cost effective and sustainable service.**

6. OUR COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE HOMES

The Committee considered the report which had been produced to reflect an extensive consultation exercise with the public and partner organisations which ran until the end of May 2015. It was advised that there had been more than 1,000 responses, which were reflected in the document. The report also outlined the background in terms of housing need and demographic trends which the Authority must respond to, such as;

- The growth in the number of older people
- The growth in the number of single people and smaller household sizes generally
- Shortages of different types of accommodation in different parts of the County
- Affordability problems and how these vary throughout the County.

The intention was set a clear policy direction and set of principles before developing a delivery plan in the autumn.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

Observations were made about the need to be flexible and innovative in the approach to building and providing affordable housing. The zero carbon affordable homes, recently built by Cardiff University, were cited as an example. The high demand by single people was also noted and it was asked if people were encouraged to house share. The Housing Services Manager advised that remodelling existing stock was the most cost-effective approach. Schemes also existed where landlords took single people into a shared environment.

Comments were made about the need to ensure the local infrastructure was in place to allow access to essential services when assessing housing need.

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Observations were made about the importance of carefully considering the best use of funding to deliver more affordable housing. There was broad agreement with public views on bringing empty properties back into use as affordable homes and also buy back of ex Council homes. The Director stated that there needed to be flexibility over funding but also a wide range of activities developed on the basis of need in different areas to deliver affordable homes. This should include buy back schemes where the need is the greatest. The Housing Services Manager advised that a buy back had been tested on a 2 bedroom house in Llanelli which had cost £77k to buy and bring up to standard with a turnaround time of less than 3 months. Far cheaper and quicker than a new build.

Comments were made about the importance of buying land suitable for development in areas of greatest housing need.

Further information was requested regarding the option of forming an arms-length company for new build. The Housing Services Manager stated that the possibility of what this could look like and deliver was being explored. The Director advised that this was a different concept from the options in the Older People debate. In housing terms, it could be a wholly owned vehicle to generate investment as it would not be subject to the borrowing cap placed on the Authority. He welcomed a political steer on the merits of exploring the option. The EBM for Housing added that the company would borrow but that the Authority would ensure any properties built were of the right standard and own them.

Observations were made about housing need in rural areas, particularly for young people, and the restrictions under the Local Development Plan and Planning Policy. The Director suspected that there was a lot of unrecorded need in rural areas with a scarcity of affordable housing. It would be important to look at options within rural villages and define absolute rather than speculative local housing need.

It was noted that a review of the allocations policy was also being undertaken and this would be presented to the Committee later in the year as well as the affordable housing delivery plan.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the Executive Board to:

- 6.1 Endorse the report**
- 6.2 Investigate new models and develop a business case for creating a wholly owned arms-length trading company for the expansion of affordable housing.**
- 6.3 Contact Cardiff University regarding its recent research into and building of zero carbon affordable homes.**