

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 13 JUNE 2024

PRESENT (In Person): Councillor G.H. John (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

B. Davies	K. Davies	A. Evans	M. James
S. Williams			

Councillors (Virtually):

B.A.L. Roberts	C. Davies	M. Donoghue	H. Jones
D. Owen	F. Walters	P.T. Warlow	J. Williams

Also in attendance (In Person):

Councillor J. Tremlett, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Services

Also Present (In Person):

A. Bracey, Head of Adult Social Care
J. Jones, Acting Head of Integrated Services
J. Coles, Head of Children and Families
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 - 10.50 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of personal interest or of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

4. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - UPDATE 1

The Committee considered a report they had requested following concerns regarding the current position within Children's service.

The report provided the first update on the progress of the Children and Families Services Transformation Plan that was developed to manage future demand and achieve a balanced budget. The report set out the progress of the transformation programme to date and the ambition over the next four years.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services highlighted that in the first quarter of 2023/24 Children and Family Services reported an overspend of £5.3m against an overall budget of £23m and that as a result, a review was commissioned and led by the Statutory Director of Social Services to undertake an analysis in relation to the drivers of the demand and to focus on areas where there had been significant overspend. The budget working group that undertook this work included the Director of Education and Children's Services, the Director of Finance, the Head of Children and Family Services, the Head of Finance, Senior Managers in Children and Family Services, and the Group Accountant.

It was noted that Carmarthenshire routinely had the lowest rate of looked after children in Wales and also maintained low numbers of children on the child protection register and that Carmarthenshire also delivered strong performance across all national performance indicators.

The Committee was advised that not counting the unaccompanied asylum seekers, the numbers of looked after children had increased by 10% since January and that traditionally there was a summer spike in numbers. It was noted that the success to date had been achieved through the strategy to invest in prevention and early intervention services.

It was stated that all data needed to be closely monitored to ensure that whenever possible, looked after children returned home to their families. The historic stability of Carmarthenshire's Workforce and Leadership at all tiers, had achieved excellent outcomes for children and as a result, Carmarthenshire spent less per head on children's social care than any other Authority in Wales.

The report of the budget working group set out the increase in demand and the changing complexity of the work that had emerged in the wake of the pandemic and the impact this had on expenditure. The budget working group recommended that investment was needed to ensure the continued safe operation of Children and Family Services. It was recommended that £5.5m in 2024/25 and £1.8m in 2026/27 was required to manage this increased and changed demand, and a transformation program had been developed. It was highlighted that the Children and Families Transformation Programme was being delivered by Children and Family Services through work streams, chaired by Senior Managers. The work streams report into a fortnightly Programme Board chaired by the Statutory Director of Social Services.

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A number of questions were raised to which officers responded. The main matters were as follows:

- It was asked how likely it was that the Authority would achieve the target of no agency workers by March 2027. In response the Head of Children and Families advised that the Authority had steadily increased the number of people being put through the traineeship programme but that it hadn't been enough to deal with the current gaps but that approximately six qualified social workers would be starting sometime in the Summer and the following year. Agency workers would be phased out as the social workers qualified. It was highlighted that external applicants had applied for every post that had been advertised.
- In response to a query regarding the monthly meetings being held with the union representatives the Head of Children and Families advised that due to the enormous amount of change being undertaken including the changes within the senior management team the union representatives were thought to be a positive facilitator in bringing the workforce together on the transformation journey.
- It was asked if the budget for the programme was being monitored separately to the general budget and if it would be reported separately from the main budget. The Head of Children and Families advised that the budget was being monitored closely as part of the transformation programme and that it would be included both within the quarterly budget monitoring reports and also the transformation programme reports.
- In response to a query regarding the confidence level of achieving the goal of not utilising for profit organisations for residential services by March 2026, the Head of Children and Families advised that she was less confident with achieving this target as although there was a plan in place to develop capacity careful consideration also needed to be given to those children already in residential care and if they should be moved.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Committee received an Annual Report detailing the work of the Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year. The report had been prepared in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution which requires Scrutiny Committees to prepare an annual report giving an account of the Committee's activities over the previous year.

The report provided an overview of the Committee's work programme and the key issues considered during the year. The report also provided details of development sessions and site visits arranged for the Committee as well as attendance data.

In presenting the report, the Chair extended his thanks to the Committee members and the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services. The

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Committee also extended their thanks to all staff for their commitment and tireless work in providing support and care for those in need during the challenging times.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2023/24 be received.

6. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN FOR 2024/25

The Committee considered its Forward Work Plan for 2024/25, which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Forward Work Plan for the Health & Social Services Scrutiny Committee for 2024/25 be confirmed subject to the removal of the Domiciliary Care Performance Update being removed from the meeting on the 25th July 2024.

7. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 2ND MAY, 2024

UNANAMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 2nd May, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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