

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2024

PRESENT: Councillor G.H. John (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

M. Donoghue	A. Evans	W.T. Evans (In Place of K. Davies)
M. James	H. Jones	F. Walters

Councillors (Virtually):

B.A.L. Roberts	C. Davies	D. Owen	P.T. Warlow
J. Williams			

Also in attendance:

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

Also Present (In Person):

J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A. Bracey, Head of Adult Social Care
J. Jones, Acting Head of Integrated Services
C. Richards, Senior Safeguarding Manager
J. Coles, Head of Children and Families
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
K.A. Jones, Service Manager
K. Barlow, Senior Manager-Complex Needs and Transition
A. Eynon, Principal Translator
D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

C. Harrison, Head of Strategic Joint Commissioning
D. Jones, Senior Accountant
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

[**Note:** The Chair advised the Committee that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(3) he was going to vary the order of business on the agenda.

Note: At 12.55 pm the Committee's attention was drawn to Council Procedure Rule 9 – Duration of Meeting and, as the meeting had been underway for almost three hours it was resolved to suspend standing orders to enable the Committee to complete the outstanding agenda items.]

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 1.05 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Davies and K. Davies.

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

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.

4. CHILDREN'S SERVICE BUDGET POSITION

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

The report set out the background and context of the budget position. It was noted that in the first quarter of 2023-2024 Children's services reported a projected overspend of £5.3 million against an overall budget of £23 million. As a result of this, 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 focus on areas where there had been significant overspend.

The Committee noted that a Transformation Plan had been developed from that analysis which aimed to manage future demand and achieve a balanced budget.

Carmarthenshire had routinely had the lowest rate of Children Looked After in Wales and also maintained low numbers of children on the Child Protection Register. This had been achieved through investment in prevention and early intervention services as well as being early adopters of innovative approaches to safeguarding.

The Head of Children and Families highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the number of strategy meetings and Section 47 investigations. Concern regarding the lack of available social workers was highlighted again and that a trainee programme was underway within the Authority which would result in an additional 10 social workers. Another area of concern raised was the need for increased capacity and new model of accommodation to reduce the overspend against Home Office funding for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The Director of Community Services stated that following the significant investment in the service area it was imperative that outcomes were met and that these would be closely monitored. Regular progress updates would be provided to Scrutiny.

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

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- Officers were asked if a request for additional funding had been made to the Home Office. The Head of Children and Families advised in conjunction with the WLGA the Home Office had been challenged regarding funding and that they would continue to do so. Details of the current funding would be circulated to the committee after the meeting.
- In response to concern regarding the cost of out of county care for children it was stated that significant investment was being made in authority owned homes and the fostering service.
- It was noted that the funding was for a 2-year period. The Head of Children and Families confirmed that it was a 2-year programme and that the fostering service would require a complete transformation.
- In response to concern raised regarding payments to foster workers it was asked if the allowance was set by the Authority or another body. The Head of Children and Families confirmed that the rate was set by the Authority although the lowest / floor rate was set by Welsh Government. The need for a transparent framework of payment was highlighted and that this work was currently in progress with on going consultation with foster carers. The framework would have to accommodate the varying needs of children.
- In reference to Welsh Government making it unlawful for Local Authorities in Wales to place children in private residential care homes after 2026, it was asked if Carmarthenshire would have sufficient provision ready. The Head of Children and Families. advised that as a result of this Carmarthenshire would need to develop local options and that the growth in the range of residential services was already underway and the expectation was that the Authority would be ready.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. PREVENTION STRATEGY FOR CARMARTHESHIRE

The Committee considered a report they had requested on the current position of the development of the Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire.

It was noted that there was currently no prevention strategy in place for Carmarthenshire or for the Hywel Dda Region and the closest report of a similar nature was the 'Prevention, Early Intervention, Promoting Independent Living Carmarthenshire: A Resilient Community' developed in 2016. Therefore, it was acknowledged that an updated prevention strategy which took into account the current position and set out the prevention vision for the future was required.

The Committee was advised that regional & local governance arrangements had been progressed with establishment of a Regional Preventions Board. Officers advised that there was a programme of work developing the preventative/community-based initiatives with third sector organisations and CAVS. This also included the development of social and micro enterprises.

A new Community Preventative Services model had been developed - Carmarthenshire's Third Sector Preventative Services. The model had been

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designed to build seamless links between services that help people of all ages stay independent within their communities or to access more formal care and support when needed. The recommissioning of the third sector preventative services had enabled providers to work together to provide flexible support. It was stated that each of the locality areas had a lead third sector provider, who along with other third sector partners were responsible for developing initiatives in line with the needs of the community. The Connect2Carmarthenshire platform captured all the activity and offers.

It was noted that the micro enterprise and social enterprise development had been launched which will provide a wider range of opportunities for personalised care and support.

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

- In response to a concern raised regarding the reliance of service providers on short term grant funding such as the Shared Prosperity fund, the Head of Strategic Joint Commissioning stated that the principle of sustainability underpinned all initiatives. It was stated that the initial funding would only be available to assist them to get projects up and running and there would be no further funding available. Support would be provided in assisting them to seek alternative funding if required.
- In response to a question regarding the reliance on 3rd sector service providers, the Head of Adult Social Care advised that the sector had a massive part to play along with the Authority. Focus was needed on prevention and building resilience to be able to respond to increased demand going forward.
- It was asked how much funding was provided by the Health Board in developing the broader preventative agenda. The Service Delivery Manger for Prevention and Wellbeing advised that funding would be requested from the Carmarthenshire Cluster fund. It was also noted that the Prevention Group had received some funding from Public Health.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SHORT BREAKS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

The Committee considered a report that provided an overview of the services for disabled children and their families. This summarised children's services duties, the current team structure and illustrated the challenges of meeting an increasing demand for services.

It was noted that Carmarthenshire met the needs of disabled children and their families through a range of short break services. These services are allocated following an assessment and can include stays at Llys Caradog and Blaenau respite centres and direct payments. In addition, support is commissioned from private and voluntary sector organisations. This includes, community support, domiciliary care and a range of specialist clubs and activities.

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

In response to a question regarding the next steps, officers advised that a policy would be developed in consultation with families which would ensure that the allocation of resources would be equitable, transparent and better matched to the level of need.

It was asked what percentage of service users received payments directly as opposed to those with parental / carer responsibilities. The Head of Children and Families advised that the information would be provided following the meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report in relation to the Health & Social Services, which provided an update on the latest budgetary position as at 31st December, 2023 in respect of the 2023/24 financial year.

The Health & Social Services was forecasting an overspend of £10,192k on the revenue budget. The main variances on capital schemes indicated a forecasted variance of -£286k against a net budget of £1,907k on social care projects, and a £3k variance against the Children Services projects net budget of £517k.

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

- It was asked if any significant changes were predicted up to the end of March. The Head of Financial Services advised that the report was based on the actuals as at the end of December and that the projections were based on the latest figures and trends which provided assurance that the forecast was accurate. It was stated that this could change in line with any potential increase in service demands.
- In reference to Appendix F – Supported Living, it was asked if any efficiency savings were predicted considering the complexity of demand. In response, the Head of Adult Social Care advised that this area had been particularly challenging and that considerable work had been undertaken. This included rightsizing of support packages, stepping down of 32 to more independent living, and the development of alternative accommodation schemes. The need for a sustainable service was highlighted and the importance of early intervention and prevention. The previous overreliance on residential care was now reducing which had resulted in better outcomes for individuals.

UNANAMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

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

8. **2023/24 QUARTER 3 - PERFORMANCE REPORT RELEVANT TO THIS SCRUTINY CABINET VISION ACTION AND MEASURES**

The Committee considered the 2023/24 Quarter 3 - Performance Report Relevant to this Scrutiny's Cabinet Vision Action and Measures. The report showed the progress as at the end of Quarter 3 – 2023/24 of the deliverables for the Cabinet Vision.

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

- In response to a query regarding what the expansion of access to support for children and vulnerable adults would look like in Carmarthenshire, the Head of Adult Social Care stated that the focus was on prevention and that prevention in adult mental health started with Children and that providing early support to children and young people with emotional and mental health issues was also a priority for the Regional Partnership Board. Reference was made to the recently published data which showed a worrying trajectory for Wales where figures were on the increase. The Head of Adult Social Care confirmed that a development session had been scheduled with the Committee where additional information would be provided.
- It was asked if the waiting for times for psychiatric referrals had improved. The Committee was advised that unfortunately children still had to wait for referrals however some improvement had been seen with the introduction of the 111 service which was launched in 2022 (Single Point of Access).
- In reference to the issues with the percentage of people referred to the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) additional information was requested what the problems were. The Head of Adult Social Care advised that she would ask the Head of Leisure for an update following the meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that report be received.

9. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 3**

The Committee considered the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3, which set out the progress against actions and measures linked to the Corporate Strategy and the Well-being objectives relevant to the Committee's remit.

The Committee noted that overall, 94% of the actions and measures were on target.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

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

10. ANNUAL REPORT ON ADULT SAFEGUARDING AND DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY SAFEGUARDS (DoLS) (2022/23)

The Committee received a report which detailed the role, functions and activities undertaken by the Authority in relation to Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards during the 2022/23 financial year.

The report detailed the current context of Safeguarding/DoLS and the arrangements the Local Authority had established. The Committee was advised that as the statutory organisation responsible for adult safeguarding, the Authority was required to have effective arrangements in place to ensure adults at risk were protected from harm. The Local Authority undertakes this role in close partnership with Dyfed Powys Police, Hywel Dda University Health Board and other statutory and non-statutory organisations.

The Committee noted that the Local Authority was also the Supervisory body for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards which ensured some of our most vulnerable citizens were properly safeguarded.

Officers advised that the proposed new legal (safeguarding) framework for scrutinising and authorising Deprivations of Liberty had yet to be finalised and circulated by the Department of Health & Social Care.

Reference was made to the Regional Safeguarding Board which provided the strategic direction and governance arrangements for adult safeguarding in the Mid and West Wales region and which had strengthened Carmarthenshire's approach to ensuring the rights of every person to live a life free from abuse and neglect.

Officers highlighted that the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) had been deemed "not fit for purpose" due in part to the requirement to disproportionately reassess people on an annual basis when it was unlikely that their circumstances would change. It was highlighted that following consultation the existing DoLS arrangements were to be replaced by a new legislation and renamed the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). The initial date for introducing LPS was October 2020 but this date had changed several and there was no confirmed date yet.

Following a query made in respect of the ambiguity regarding the 7 day timescale, it was clarified that the 7 day was clear but it was the expectations of what needed to be achieved within the 7 days that was ambiguous. In a case where police investigation was required then this would not be achievable in 7 days. Partnership work was on going to develop a procedure and to provide clarity to practitioners on what needs to be established.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

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

11. THE MID & WEST WALES SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & ADULTS BOARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the objectives and achievements of the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children & Adults Board and outlined the progress made against the outcomes set by CYSUR and CWMPAS as part of the joint Annual Strategic Plan.

Reference was made to significant investment and time that had been dedicated throughout the year to support the development of the new Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SURS) process, including the development of the draft statutory guidance that had been published early in the year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

12. CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

Reference was made to the Wales Audit Office review undertaken during the period July to August 2023 which recommended the revision of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy that covered all the council's service areas.

The policy set out the individual and collective responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk and established a governance structure which had oversight of the arrangements to safeguard children and adults at risk. It set out the methods by which the Council would be assured that it was fulfilling its duties and that effective practices were in place to support individuals to live their life free from harm, abuse and neglect in a wide range of settings including home, hospital, school, learning environments, peer/friendship groups, neighbourhoods, communities and online spaces.

Officers highlighted that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy provided a framework for every Directorate and Service area within and across the Council and detailed the methods by which the Council would be assured that it was fulfilling its duties and that effective practices were in place to support individuals to live their life free from harm, abuse and neglect in a wide range of settings including home, hospital, school, learning environments, peer/friendship groups, neighbourhoods, communities and online spaces.

The Committee noted that staff awareness and training sessions had been scheduled and a briefing scheduled for members on the 8th May.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

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

13. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the following scrutiny reports.

- 10 Year Social Services Strategy

RESOLVED that the explanation for the non-submission be noted.

14. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 2nd May, 2024 be noted with the inclusion of Children's Service budget position report.

15. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 25TH JANUARY, 2024

UNANAMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 25th January, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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