

SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillor G. Thomas (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, K.Davies, R.E. Evans, W.T. Evans, M.J.A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, K. Madge, D. Nicholas (In place of D.T. Williams) and B. Thomas (In place of A.L. Fox)

Also in attendance Councillors:

L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council
J. Tremlett, Executive Board Member for Social Care and Health

The following Officers were in attendance:

J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
A. Bracey, Head of Social Care
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities
A. Williams, Head of Integrated Services
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager
S. Sauro, Performance, Analysis & Systems Manager
L. Davies, Simultaneous Translator
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.00 am - 11.40 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.L. Fox, B.A.L. Roberts and D.T. Williams.

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

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
Kevin Madge	4. Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2020/2021.	Daughter works in Social Care.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

[**NOTE:** The Chair advised the Committee that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(3) she was going to vary the order of business on the agenda to enable agenda item 5 – Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21 to be considered next.]

4. CARMARTHENSIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020/2021

The Committee was informed that in line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 the Authority must publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year and under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Authority was also required to publish an Annual Report on its Well-being Objectives.

The Council's draft Annual Report included the Well-being Objectives relevant to the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee. The report concluded that 2020/21 was a year like no other due to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The vast majority of the Council's services had had to adapt and change, with many being shut down for long periods of the year. The Committee noted that for this reason, it had not been possible for the 2020-21 Annual Report to act as a progress report on previous performance or as a comparator with other local authorities.

The report reflected the actions the Council had to take to support its residents, communities and businesses through the pandemic. With many staff redeployed to assist in the pandemic response and many set to work to aid recovery the Council's priorities had had to shift significantly to face the challenges presented by the pandemic.

The Deputy Leader stated that the report captured the effort made to support residents and businesses. It was stated that the pandemic had given the authority the opportunity to work closer with partners and that residents and businesses had come together to provide support to each other within the community.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Concern was expressed regarding homelessness within the County. The Head of Homes and Safer Communities advised the demand for housing had increased over the last 12-16 months. It was stated that Welsh Government had changed the legislation due to covid which meant the authority had to procure B&B accommodation quickly. It was noted that the issue would remain and that plans were in development to deal with this in a sustained way.
- Thanks was expressed to all volunteers and individuals who had stepped up to help within the community. The pandemic had highlighted the importance that communities support each other.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SOCIAL CARE SERVICES IN CARMARTHENSHIRE 2020/21

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21. Members were informed that there was a statutory requirement for the Director of Social Services to report annually on delivery and performance, as well as plans for the improvement of the whole range of social services.

The report detailed the progress made on areas identified for improvement in last year's report and highlighted those areas to be developed in the current year. It examined each service area within Social Care and showed how service strategies, actions, targets and service risks would be addressed and delivered operationally by the service this year, based on the approved budget. The report also set out the challenges due to COVID 19 and highlighted the areas to be developed in the current year.

The report outlined how the service performed in 2020/21 together with an assessment on the future, together with strategic priorities for 2021/22. It linked closely with the Business Plans for the Directorates of Community Services and Education & Children's Services.

Following publication of the report, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Welsh Government would complete their analysis and review of the report. There would be a formal meeting with CIW in October to discuss their analysis and proposed plan. This will be followed by an Annual Letter to Council in late November/early December, confirming their analysis and inspection plan. The process will link in closely with the Wales Programme for Improvement and the Annual Letter from the Wales Audit Office.

The Director of Community Services stated that the report had been challenging to write and drew the committee's attention to the statutory notice dated June 1st, 2020 which detailed that he had been unable to assure Council of being able to provide properly functioning social care services. The lack of PPE combined with the impact of the virus on residents in care homes, care staff and families were major concerns which had not been helped by the lack of timely guidance provided by Public Health Wales. It was noted that the care home system had been hours away from collapsing with four private care homes unable to operate without intervention from the authority.

Credit was given to the care sector workforce in maintaining statutory visits and consistently delivering during a challenging time. It was summarised that it had been a difficult year but with extraordinary response and good outcomes considering the situation.

A number of questions were raised to which the Director of Community Services responded. The main matters were as follows:-

- It was asked what the current situation was with care homes. The Director of Community Services stated that there were no issues with the supply of PPE and that care home residents were above 90% double

vaccinated and that evidence indicated that the workforce and residents were being protected by the vaccination. It was noted that the occupancy rate was much lower than expected and that financial support received from Welsh Government had covered the voids, however, funding would likely be phased out in September. Recruitment was a constant challenge, but Carmarthenshire had not experienced issues to the degree that neighbouring authorities had. The Director of Community Services hoped that (notwithstanding Public Health Wales guidance) care homes visits would soon return to normal. However, it was noted that caution was still required and that it was a trade off between the right to see family / social connection and protecting the wider care home.

- A question was asked how the lack of PPE at the start of the pandemic had impaired the work of staff in general.
The Director of Community Services stated that there had been a global supply chain issue. There had been a period where masks cost £7 / 8 instead of pence. It was expressed that policy issues and delay in guidance from Public Health Wales had meant that on occasions equipment couldn't not be supplied. Assurance was provided that planning for future variants was well advanced.
- It was stated that there should be more local vaccination centres due to residents in parts of the County having to travel a significant distance to the showground.
The Head of Integrated Services advised that the Health Board had a mobile vaccination unit which was currently being used to target areas where uptake of the vaccination was low. It was indicated that as the facility was already available there may be scope to roll out the use of this unit in more remote areas of the County.
- It was asked what lessons had been learnt from the last 18 months and if there was a review being undertaken nationally or by Welsh Government regarding the impact of the pandemic on care homes.
The Director of Community Services advised that he was not certain on what reviews were being undertaken by Welsh Government but that a National review would be welcomed. Assurance was provided that the authority had undertaken its own detailed study.
- Concern was expressed regarding the apparent blanket approach to DNR for residents in care homes at the start of the pandemic.
The Director of Community Services advised that in his opinion the DNR process wasn't always followed, and that more engagement should have been undertaken with patients and families to enable them to make informed decisions. During this time collaborative working with the Health Board and the senior team meant that the issue had been resolved.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- **the Draft Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21 be received,**
- **the authority write to Welsh Government requesting a review of the issues experienced in care homes during the pandemic.**

6. SOCIAL CARE & HEATH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Committee received an Annual Report detailing the work of the Committee during the 2020/21 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.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2020/21 be received.

7. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

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

- Covid 19 Update
- Annual Safeguarding Report
- End of Year Budget Monitoring Report

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

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 5th October, 2021 be noted.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 21ST MAY, 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 21st May, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE