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## SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### 21.02.13

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**Present:**

**Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn – Chairman**  
**Councillor Peter Read - Vice-chairman**

Councillors: Huw Edwards, Elin Walker Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Siôn Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Liz Saville Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Wyn Williams and R. Hefin Williams.

**Teachers' Unions:** David Healy (NASUWT), Dilwyn Hughes (UCAC)

**Cabinet Members:** Councillor Siân Gwenllian (Education)  
Councillor R H Wyn Williams (Care)

**Officers:** Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Morwena Edwards (Statutory Director of Social Services) Gareth James (Members' Manager Support and Scrutiny) and Glynda O'Brien (Members and Scrutiny Support Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Alwyn Gruffydd, Selwyn Griffiths (ex-officio Member), Rev. Robert Townsend (Church in Wales), Mrs Rhian Roberts (Dwyfor Parent Governors Representative), Siôn Amllyn (NASUWT).

#### 1. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Mr Dilwyn Hughes and Mr David Healy namely the Teachers' Unions representatives to the meeting following the resolution of this Scrutiny Committee to elect them as Co-opted Members without a vote onto the Committee. It was noted that the appointment would be formalised in a report to the full Council in due course.

#### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

#### 3. MINUTES

(a) The Chairman signed the minutes of a meeting of this Committee held on 10 January 2013 as a true record subject to adding the words "especially on the weekend" to the resolution in Item 6 (A) (b) to read:

"To request the Senior Adult Services Manager contacts the Health Boards outside Gwynedd to express the concern of this Scrutiny Committee regarding the relationship between Hospitals and Social Services and how arrangements to receive patients' assessments for those sent home from hospital can be improved and the need for provision of the enablement scheme **especially on the weekend**".

(b) In response to a query from a Member regarding the action stemming from the minutes of the previous meeting, the Chairman gave an assurance that the matters requiring attention would be discussed at the next preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

#### **4. GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE PEMBROKESHIRE JOINT INSPECTORATES REVIEW REPORT**

(a) A joint report was presented by the Corporate Director (ITJ) and the Statutory Director of Social Services, outlining the main developments within Gwynedd Council in responding to the report of the joint inspectorates' review of child protection in Pembrokeshire and a response to specific points at the request of the Scrutiny Committee.

(b) The Education Cabinet Member reported that she was aware of the report published jointly with Estyn and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in relation to child safety arrangements in Pembrokeshire. Consequently, one of the main priorities of the Education Cabinet Member when she was appointed to her post as a Cabinet Member was to investigate this Council's procedure in this area. An independent report was commissioned to identify how to respond specifically to issues in the children's field. It was true to note that there were gaps in service provision in Gwynedd such as in procedures and accountability that was not sufficiently robust. As a result of that report a detailed work programme was put in place and by now the Cabinet Member was much more content that the procedures were on the correct path. A further investigation was requested to outline why there were gaps in some areas and it was trusted that this report would be ready at the beginning of next month. A Strategic Panel – Safety of Children and Young People was established within Gwynedd Council with the Education Cabinet Member chairing. It was noted that a Project Group of Senior Managers supported the work and challenging reports were received to push the agenda forward in the field of children as well as with vulnerable adults.

(c) The Statutory Director of Social Services explained that her statutory role was divided. She had a statutory role within the Council to ensure that arrangements to protect and safeguard children were suitable and appropriate and that other individuals within the Council also had specific responsibilities. In the context of the Strategic Panel the role of the Statutory Director was to support the Chair and the Care Cabinet Member.

(ch) The role of the Statutory Director was discussed and the following points were highlighted by individual Members.

- The importance of a close link between Members and the Statutory Director especially in those Wards where care homes/homes for the disabled were located.
- The importance that Members were aware of what was happening especially in the children's field as well as to ensure a check of private companies that provide a service to the Council in this area.

(d) In response, the Statutory Director Social Services noted that it was important to have the correct culture within and beyond the Council and it should be ensured that monitoring arrangements were on top of the list of priorities. It was noted that the role

of the CSSIW had changed over the years and they had taken an overview role and expected providers to undertake checks and therefore there was more pressure on the Council to deal with investigations. A comment made by a Member that the Council had to be more proactive was accepted. It was recognised that the timetable had not been achieved regarding the collection of evidence on the quality of residential provision for children with additional needs and the Statutory Director would consider the structure of the unit to ensure that the officers were in the correct roles to respond to the actions. Members were reminded that the Statutory Director had only been in post for six months and this issue had been one of the main priorities that had received her attention. She felt that the field had not been discussed often enough at the Corporate Management Group but had been a subject discussed by Social Services.

(dd) It was noted by a Member that the report was general and it would be beneficial to receive more quantitative facts.

(e) Members were given an opportunity to question the contents of the report and they highlighted the following issues:

- (i) Were CRB checks required for Year 10 pupils when they attended work experience?
- (ii) Was there too much emphasis on CRB checks bearing in mind that there was no advantage to the employers and that they offer places for children as part of their social duty?
- (iii) Would it be possible for the Council to contribute towards the cost of CRBs to employers as it was an additional cost for small companies?
- (iv) Was it possible to implement different procedures such as a risk assessment of the workplace?

(f) In response, the Corporate Director explained that the matter required attention and it was stressed how important it was for every employer to have the correct policies in terms of the safety of young people on work experience in accordance with the Service Level Agreement by Careers Wales.

(ff) It was noted that a risk assessment was a totally different action and every work location was not the same. It could be suggested that it was unnecessary for all employees to receive a CRB check and it should be restricted to the individual who supervised the pupil on work experience.

(g) The Statutory Director expressed concern regarding not implementing CRB checks.

(h) In the context of ensuring a balance between human rights/ freedom act and maintain a safe workforce, the Statutory Director explained that there was no easy answer. A great deal of information had been kept in different Council departments and it was important to draw all this information together as a corporate data bank in order to ensure an overview of the information.

(i) Several members felt that it was necessary to consider the different types of offences that should be noted on corporate data and certainly before making enquiries directly with individuals regarding past offences.

(j) The role of the Scrutiny Committee to challenge the work of the Strategic Panel was discussed: Safeguarding Children and Young People and the Statutory Director's corporate role and it was asked if there were weaknesses in the Human Resources

procedures specifically regarding the lack of references received and checking CRB forms.

In response, it was explained that the Head of Human Resources and the Senior Officer served on the Strategic Panel and a protocol was required and better understanding across the Council corporately.

In terms of the corporate role, it was explained that the report would be submitted by the Strategic Panel via the Education Cabinet Member to the Cabinet and it was possible for the Services Scrutiny Committee to call in the report for scrutiny. The Corporate Director added that certainly progress had been achieved with CRB checks as only 160 out of 6,600 had not been checked thus far. Approximately 240 staff did not have the correct information in terms of references and it was noted that Human Resources were going through the process of receiving them and a more robust policy would be in place by looking at the process of appointing to posts that deal with children and young people.

It was proposed and seconded that the Services Scrutiny Committee should receive an annual report from the Strategic Panel and that it was noted on the Committee's work programme as a permanent subject.

(l) It was estimated that it would be a cost of £260,000 every three years for the Council to check CRB forms, and it was asked if it was necessary to check them every three years. The Care Cabinet Member noted that money had been earmarked centrally to respond to this.

(m) In response to concern regarding the role of Members and protection when they met young people in their homes as part of the daily work in their Wards, the Education Cabinet Member explained that the matter had received attention by the Strategic Panel and in accordance with guidance from the Legal Department, it was understood that every Member required a CRB check. Training was offered in this field that would deal with how Members should behave appropriately in situations in accordance with a clear protocol that would be part of the corporate training.

(n) Members were of the view:

- That every Member should receive a CRB check as a Corporate Parent at their own cost.
- That a panel of three officers (Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Statutory Director Social Services) should be established with two members to discuss and monitor the situation.

(o) In response, the Corporate Director noted that the Government was airing this matter and the field of child safety would have priority in the Council's 4 Year Strategic Plan in order that the matter receives attention.

(p) Concern was expressed regarding Point 4(b) which appeared as a green action statement in the Youth Service, yet it was noted that significant gaps continued in terms of Level 2 training for staff and managers.

In response, the Statutory Director of Social Services gave an assurance that she would check the above and contact the Member to update her on the position.

- (r) In response to various observations by Members, the following were noted:-
- That in terms of child protection the Council's Self-evaluation was noted as sufficient as historically the field had not received deserving attention, however, it was stressed that the usual steps in the field by now was quite a feat and it was shown that the forecast was good.
  - That the authority encouraged the use of Webster Stratton strategies in the County's primary school in order to promote good behaviour from the pupils.
  - That the Safeguarding Children's Local Board was a multi-agency body and in the past the focus had been reserved to multi-agency arrangements rather than the Council's corporate arrangements. By now much more attention was given to the Council's own procedures as well as to support multi-agency work.
  - That the Strategic Panel: to Safeguard Children and Young People was to be praised in terms of what had been achieved thus far and it was important to maintain the level of progress. Meetings of the Panel were held in the evening every two months with a Project Group of officers meeting every fortnight.
  - That it would be a requirement to implement and strengthen the arrangements for collecting evidence on the quality of the residential provision by external agencies/bodies/private agencies for children with additional needs as it appeared red in terms of its action status. The CSSIW had undertaken more in this field in the past and the Statutory Director ensured that she met regularly with CSSIW officers and that she would submit a progress report to the Scrutiny Committee as part of its work programme.
  - In the context of the Council having its own specialist provision, it was noted that there was considerable work proceeding in terms of autism and an excellence centre with the intention of establishing most of the provision locally. However, specialist support was required for some individuals and it would not be cost effective to provide locally. The excellence centre would replace the existing Ysgol Hafod Lon and would offer a residential element to respond to the requirements of individuals and their families and would be a means to keep young people in Gwynedd. It was trusted that the centre would be located in the centre of the County and would offer a service through the medium of Welsh. Currently, it was noted that the costs of locating out of county were down, however, every individual could not be placed at Hafod Lon and it would be necessary to use out of county expertise for more profound needs.
  - That every effort was made to support a child linguistically and culturally when they have to be located out of county. In addition, in Gwynedd a great deal of schemes were coordinated via Cwmni Derwen which was a service established jointly with the Health Board and promoted pioneering schemes to respond to the needs of children and to collaborate with parents. The Statutory Director of Social Services gave an assurance that she would investigate further into the arrangements for children located out of county because of reasons concerning safety in order to ensure that they are not excluded linguistically and culturally especially if the situation was complex at home.

**Resolved: (i) To approve the direction of the work to date in responding to the Inspectors' report into child safety in Pembrokeshire.**

(ii) Ensure that the following matters were added to the Scrutiny Committee's Programme of Work in order to submit a:

(a) Annual Report by the Strategic Panel: Safeguarding of Children and Young People, Gwynedd Council

(b) Progress report by the Statutory Director of Social Services regarding strengthening the arrangements to collect evidence on the quality of the residential provision by external agencies/bodies/private agencies for children with additional needs

(iii) Request that the Statutory Director of Social Services deals with the Members' concerns in the following areas:

(a) the significant gaps in terms of level 2 training for staff and managers noted in Point 4(b) of the Project Management Plan: Respond to the Pembrokeshire Joint Review Report

(b) Investigate further the arrangements for children located out of county due to reasons concerning safety in order to ensure that they are not excluded linguistically and culturally especially if the situation with the family is complex.

## 5. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The latest version of this Scrutiny Committee's work programme was submitted.

**Resolved:** To discuss the work programme in detail at the preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee to be held on 26 February 2013 and to note the additional matters referred to in (ii) above to be added to the work programme.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.50am.