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## CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 15/11/18

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Chair)  
Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, Elin Walker Jones, Cai Larsen, Dafydd Owen, Rheinallt Puw, Angela Russell, Catrin Wager and Edgar Owen Vice Chairman of the Council

**Officers:** Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

In relation to item 5 on the agenda - Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Arwel Owen (Senior Housing Manager), Susan Griffiths (Homelessness and Supported Housing Officer), Aled Humphreys (Housing Strategic Manager) and Llinos Edwards (Senior Executive Officer)

In relation to item 6 on the agenda - Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Rhion Glyn (Senior Business Manager), and Hawis Jones (Adults, Health and Well-being Projects Team Manager)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Menna Baines, Anwen Davies, R. Medwyn Hughes, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Beth Lawton and Peter Read. Also Councillor W. Gareth Roberts (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being).

### **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

(a) The following members declared a personal interest in the following items for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Cai Larsen in item 5 on the agenda (Homelessness Strategy) as he represented the Council on the Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd
- Councillor Dewi Roberts in item 6 (Recruiting and Retaining Domiciliary Care Staff) as his wife worked for as a carer for the Care Department

The members were not of the opinion that they were prejudicial interests, and they did not withdraw from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

### **3. URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent items were received.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 13 September 2018 as a true record.

## 5. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture presented the report and noted that Gwynedd Council had carried out a Strategic Review of Homelessness in accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act (2014). It was reiterated that the findings of the review set a foundation for developing a Homelessness Strategy and that the Housing Service was currently in consultation on local actions that would address the aims and requirements of the Strategy.

Reference was made to an executive summary included with the report that provided a detailed analysis of the levels and nature of homelessness, an audit of the services and review of the resources available to spend on homelessness in the County. It was reiterated that the executive summary provided evidence for the North Wales Regional Homelessness Strategy and the Gwynedd Local Homelessness Provision Action Plan.

The Senior Housing Manager and the Homelessness and Housing Support Manager gave a PowerPoint presentation summarising the main findings of the review and the considerations identified. It was highlighted that the local action plan (2018-2022) had been created in response to the review and was available on the Council's website.

In response to a question regarding the effect of universal credit on the work of the Homelessness Team, members were reminded that Gwynedd did not yet have a full Universal Credit Service and that only new applicants were given assistance. Nevertheless, it was noted that work was being done to prepare individuals and families for the change and that a dedicated officer was available to help with vulnerable individuals. Members were encouraged to refer any requests for advice to the Housing Solutions Officer who specialises in the service.

In response to an observation about the high numbers evicted from their homes because of failure to pay rent, it was highlighted that the Homelessness Team was very eager to collaborate with the Housing Associations and that information about individuals / families would be shared in an attempt to find a solution before people were evicted. It was reiterated that Housing Associations had steps in place to try to prevent homelessness and if all those steps had been taken the Homelessness Service would step in to assist and provide support.

In response to a question about the Services's capacity to deal with the increase in numbers requesting help, it was noted that the Homelessness Service had insufficient resources to cope with the extra work. The Cabinet Member suggested that a report could be submitted that would highlight that the Service was aware of the challenge it would face in response to the increase. The Head of Service reiterated that every effort was being made to ensure that the person was at the centre of the service and, by anticipating the further increase in demand, it was noted that a financial bid had been submitted to strengthen the capacity for this increasing need. They would have to make the best use of the resource and endeavour to prioritise

The Chair noted that he did not wish to see the impact of Universal Credit becoming an additional burden for the Service's officers, and any concerns should be brought to the Committee's attention before the situation deteriorated.

In response to a comment about the use of Discretionary Housing Payments, and the allegation that the Council returned the funds that had not been used, it was suggested that a request be made to the Head of Finance for an update. The Homelessness Manager reiterated that Gwynedd Council made full use of the Discretionary Housing Payments budget.

In response to a question about provision for young prison-leavers, it was noted that a dedicated officer was in charge of coordinating this work through identifying accommodation before they left prison. It was reiterated that the Officer had been short-listed for a 'Cymorth Cymru' award as the programme had been identified as pioneering.

During the ensuing discussion, the following observations by Members were noted:

- The private sector provision needed to be considered - need to ensure that the standard of the houses met the statutory requirements
- The review conveyed the problems but did not offer solutions
- There was a need to bring more empty houses back into use
- Wylfa - needed to collaborate with Anglesey to try to identify elements that would have an effect
- There was a need to share good practice with other Councils
- A suggestion to review the points system - the current system did not reflect the desperate situation of individuals / families
- Had the emergence of AirBnB reduced the number of properties available for housing?
- Suggestion to review the available provision according to area
- Was it possible for the Council to establish an arm's length company to provide social housing

The Cabinet Member stated that a review of the points system was under-way and that there would be an opportunity to consult on the proposals. It was also highlighted that the Housing Strategy would soon be introduced and that this would identify specific fields and would be an opportunity to consider alternative and creative ideas.

**Resolved:**

- **to accept the information.**
- **to congratulate the Service for making it on to the 'Cymorth Cymru' shortlist**
- **to ask the Cabinet Member to address Members' observations in drawing up the Housing Strategy**

## **6. RECRUITING AND RETAINING DOMICILIARY CARE STAFF IN GWYNEDD - OLDER PEOPLE**

The Senior Business Manager presented a report highlighting the initial findings of the review by CELyn company into the field of recruiting and retaining domiciliary care staff in Gwynedd. It was reiterated that the final report would be presented as part of a scrutiny investigation by the Committee, which was already part of the Committee's work programme.

It was noted that the situation had recently deteriorated in relation to waiting lists for care in parts of Arfon and Pen Llŷn as well as in Meirionnydd. It was reiterated

that this was a cause for concern for the Department and meant that many people across the County had to go without care.

Thanks were given for the report and it was stated that the time was right to convey the initial messages.

In response to a question about the numbers of packages being returned by the private sector, it was noted that the information was available and that the situation was being monitored

The Head of Service noted that a high percentage of the Departments existing workers would be of retirement age within five to ten years and that this could exacerbate the problem for the future.

During the ensuing discussion, members made the following observations:

- Discussions would have to be held with the Private Sector
- There was a need to attract young people down a career path in care - was it possible to find out the demography and the age at which people started working in the field of care?
- Needed to target men into Care work
- Having a car was not necessary (as a requirement of the post) in every community
- The status of the work needed to be elevated
- Consideration needed to be given to salary and work pressures

The Head of the Service noted that the brief proposals for the investigation would be presented at a meeting with the Cabinet Member, the Head of Service and Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee in order to move the work forward as a priority field.

Members were requested to put their names forward to the Scrutiny Manager if they were interested in being part of the investigation. It was suggested that members of the third sector and partners should also be part of the investigation.

**The officers were thanked for the information.**

**The report was accepted.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.40 pm

**CHAIRMAN**