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## CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14/11/19

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**Present:** Councillor Dewi Roberts (Chair).  
Councillor Beth Lawton (Vice-chair).

**Councillors:** Menna Baines, Annwen Daniels, Alan Jones Evans, Gareth T.M.Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Dafydd Owen and Angela Russell.

**Officers present:** Llywela Owain (Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

**Present for item 5 below:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being)  
Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive)  
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)  
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Dafydd Gibbard (Head of Housing and Property Department)  
Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

**Present for item 6a below:-**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive)  
Dafydd Paul (Senior Safeguarding and Quality Manager)  
Lowri Williams (Customer Care Officer)

**Present for item 6b below:-**

Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being)  
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Geraint Wyn Jones (Customer Care Officer)

**Present for item 7 below:**

Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being)  
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Meilys Heulfryn Smith (Health and Care Transformation Programme Manager)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Anwen Davies and R. Medwyn Hughes.  
Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The following members declared a personal interest in item 7 - Domiciliary Care Project - for the reasons noted below:-

- Councillor Dewi Roberts, Chair, as his wife was employed in the care sector in the Dwyfor Area.
- Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as his wife received domiciliary care.
- Councillor Angela Russell as her father received domiciliary care.
- Councillor Gareth T. M. Jones as his mother received domiciliary care.

The members were of the opinion that they were prejudicial interests, and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item. In the absence of the Chair, the item was chaired by the Vice-chair, Councillor Beth Lawton.

### **3 URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 12 September 2019 as a true record.

### **5. 2020/21 SAVINGS**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property; inviting the committee to scrutinise the savings proposals made by the Children and Supporting Families Department, the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Housing and Property Department to cope with their share of the possible £2m deficit in the 2020/21 budget, and to consider what that, or the alternative options, might entail.

The Cabinet Member and heads of department expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions/observations by the Members.

#### Children and Supporting Families Department Savings

During the discussion, concern was expressed by a number of members that the cut of £30,000 to Women's Aid would lead to greater costs to the Council in the long term, and the importance of a full assessment of the possible impact to the Council was emphasised.

In response to an enquiry, the Head of the Children and Supporting Families department explained that the historic plans were very ambitious. She gave detail regarding the element which had already been realised, noting that a taskforce had been established to determine whether the remaining savings could be found elsewhere. There was little detail to be had on this so far, but she noted that she could bring a report back to the committee in future.

The Chief Executive added that the taskforce's report could be brought back for members to observe, but as the Cabinet needed to make a fairly quick decision regarding the savings proposals, time was limited.

#### Adults, Health and Well-being Department

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:

- General concern was expressed regarding the impact of the savings proposals on vulnerable county residents, and the importance of monitoring the impact was emphasised.
- A number of members expressed particular concern regarding the proposal to cut two Mental Health Support Worker positions (£42,000), in light of the increasing demand for the service as a result of the significant increase in mental health problems amongst children and young people. It was suggested that there was a need for more rather than fewer workers, and that this cut would ultimately cost more to the Council. It was also noted that mental health was a Welsh Government and Health Board priority, and that the service should be provided by the Health

Board. However, the work was being passed on to the councils, which had insufficient resources to complete it.

- A number of members expressed particular concern regarding the proposal to reduce the budget for supporting carers, including some respite schemes (£19,000). It was emphasised that the stress for families affected would be terrible and that this cut would ultimately cost more to the Council.

On a general note, an enquiry was made as to whether the Health Board contributed as it should, e.g. the cost of caring for vulnerable people discharged from hospitals fell on the Council. In response, the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department noted that the Council and the Health Board had a good relationship, acknowledging at the same time that there were certain challenges; however, he was of the opinion that the observation highlighted the strong argument for the integration of health and care on a local level.

In response to a further enquiry regarding the funding distribution arrangements between the Health Board and the councils on a regional level, the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department noted that he, the Cabinet Member and the Social Services Statutory Director could look into the matter and bring the information back to the committee.

In response to the committee's observations, the Chief Executive noted that the scrutiny committee's role was to decide, should it be required that the Department submit savings proposals, whether the proposals listed in the report or other proposals would have the least impact on the county's vulnerable people. He also noted that it was not possible to ask other departments to bear some of the burden, as all the Council's departments were in the same situation of having to find their share to address the deficit of £2m.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Department had thoroughly weighed out all options, and that the impact of any other proposals, not included on the list, would be even worse than those before the committee.

The Chief Executive suggested that one possible way forward would be to ask the Department to look at the fields of highest expenditure, such as the older people sector in its entirety and third sector agreements.

In wake of the Chief Executive's comments and the committee's unwillingness to accept the proposals to make cuts in the fields of mental health and carers' services, it was suggested that the Department be asked to identify further cuts in the two fields which see the highest expenditure, namely third sector agreements or older people's services.

#### Housing and Property Department

During the discussion, the Department was congratulated for its method of identifying savings by internalising aspects of its work, and its intention to look at all similar opportunities in future was welcomed.

In response to an enquiry regarding the schemes which had not been achieved, the Head of Housing and Property Department explained that the Department was looking for other schemes. There would be a discussion regarding this at the next performance challenging meeting, and it was hoped that it would be possible to report back to this committee in the New Year.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) To approve the Housing and Property Department's proposals to achieve its share of relevant savings as ones which would have the least impact on residents.**

- (b) To accept the reports on the proposals put forward by the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to achieve their share of relevant savings; and to request that the Cabinet consider the committee's observation as to whether these truly were the proposals which would have the least impact before approving the savings.**

## **6. ANNUAL REPORT ON DEALING WITH SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS 2018/19**

### **(A) ANNUAL REPORT ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND INFORMATION REQUESTS BY THE CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DEPARTMENT FOR 2018-19**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, providing an overview of the complaints, information requests and statements of appreciation received during 2018/19.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The committee's appreciation of the staff's hard work was expressed, and it was noted that it was positive to see that so few complaints had been received, and that so few of those complaints had progressed to Step 2.

It was noted that although the historic information was included in the report, that it would be beneficial to see the figures in the form of a table, so as to clearly see whether a pattern had developed.

Referring to complaint GC/3257-15 in Appendix 3 to the report, and specifically to the Ombudsman's strong view that autism training should be available to everyone within the Department, and not limited to Derwen staff, an enquiry was made as to whether there had been any further development on this matter. In response, the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Manager noted:-

- In addition to the question of training, that there was a question regarding social workers' ability to cope with situations where extremely specialist elements were present within assessments.
- That a new service was now in place at a North Wales level, and a procedure in place so that teams within children's services could gain clarity in terms of what could be offered in addition to what previously existed.
- That this interlinked with matters such as guidance for access to Derwen services, and whether someone who had autism and had ability and was able to act independently was considered disabled, etc.
- Therefore, there was much complexity in this case between the legal advice given, the wording of the legislation, and the Ombudsman's decision in terms of how that should be interpreted.
- Following the Ombudsman's latest challenge, that a specialist in the autism field had been commissioned to further support the Council in ensuring that the arrangements were stronger for the future.
- As there was a strong lobby for this type of specialist services, the Council faced considerable pressure to be able to assess in accordance with its duties; but it was believed that the new interlinking with the service for North Wales was beneficial in reinforcing this.
- That a response had been sent to the Ombudsman on this matter, and that there had been further discussions between the Council and the Ombudsman

regarding to what extent the Ombudsman was satisfied with the steps the Council had now put in place.

The Cabinet Member noted that he did not wish for the committee to go into overly detailed discussion on this matter as the case was a live one and referred to an individual. He explained that the Council did not have much experience of dealing with the Ombudsman, as only one case had arisen in several years, and he suggested that the Chief Executive could perhaps expand on the Council's progress in terms of responding and developing the relationship with the Ombudsman.

The Chief Executive noted:-

- That this had been an extremely difficult case, and as the Department had not experienced many cases in which the Ombudsman had decided against it, it was possible that we had not been successful in changing our operating principles to what the Ombudsman would have liked to have seen.
- That a letter had been received from the Ombudsman following his second report, expressing concern regarding aspects of what had been done.
- That he would be paying a visit to the Ombudsman the following week, and that he was of the opinion that it was mainly communication issues which were at the root of this matter.
- That he was reasonably confident that the Council had attempted to do the right thing, but in so doing, had forgotten that it was necessary to adhere to the letter of what had been agreed with the Ombudsman.
- That the Ombudsman had noted in his first report that he expected the Council to provide training on the complaints procedure to all its social workers within 12 months, so that they were aware of their duties should they identify an individual who wished to make a complaint. Despite the fact that the report to this committee and the report submitted to the Cabinet in July noted that training sessions 'would' be held, the Ombudsman was outraged, as the July Cabinet meeting was held two months after the time by which the training should have been completed.
- As there had also been confusion regarding the wording of one of the Ombudsman's recommendations relating to the parents' assessment, we also did not comply with another clause which we had agreed to implement.
- That the recommendations of the report had now been acted upon, and that the assessment for the parent was also happening. He would report this in his meeting with the Ombudsman.

In response to an enquiry regarding play facilities for children at Hafan y Sêr, the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Manager noted that there was now an agreement between the services for moving the matter forward. The Member was thanked for his intervention, which had been helpful in breaking down the barriers.

It was noted that there was a great appreciation of the provision at Hafan y Sêr, and that staff should be contacted to thank them for all their work.

On behalf of the Service, the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Manager thanked the Customer Care Officer for all her work. Members also expressed their gratitude to the officer, to all the officers named in Appendix 4 to the report (list of examples of appreciation 2018/19), and those who may not have been named; and asked for a message to be sent back to the Department conveying the committee's appreciation of their valuable work.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**(B) ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, providing an overview of the complaints, enquiries and statements of appreciation received during 2018/19.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The Department was congratulated on the reduction in the number of complaints, and the committee's appreciation of the staff's hard work was expressed.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**7. HOME CARE PROJECT**

The meeting was chaired by the Vice-chair during the discussion on this item, due to the Chair's interest in the matter in question.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, providing a brief update on the work which was ongoing to ensure a new model for domiciliary care provision in Gwynedd.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:

- It was noted that this new model for domiciliary care provision put Gwynedd at the forefront of the field.
- The emphasis on communication with workers was welcomed.
- The collaboration with the Health Board to present the business case to the Finance and Planning Committee was welcomed, and hope was expressed that there would be joint-commissioning, as this would be beneficial to both partners.
- It was noted that it was encouraging to hear, should some providers withdraw / fail to meet the requirements, that the Council had considerably sized internal providers which could employ the staff.

It was noted that the committee would receive further information as the work moved forward, and that there would also be a need to discuss with the Chair and Vice-chair.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.35 pm

**CHAIRMAN**