
CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30/09/2021

Present: Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Chairman).
Councillor Angela Russell (Vice-chair)

Councillors:

Menna Baines, Beca Brown, R Medwyn Hughes, Gareth Tudor Morris Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Wyn Roberts

Officers present:

Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor), Einir Rhian Davies (Democracy Services Officer), Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser).

Present for item 5:

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property), Carys F Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department) and Hedd M Tomos (Housing Supply Manager, Housing and Property Department).

Present for item 6:

Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and Link with the Health Service), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Rhion Glyn (Senior Business Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Hawis M Jones (Projects Team Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Department)

Present for item 7:

Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and Link with the Health Service), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Mannon E Trappe (Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Adults, Health and Well-being Department)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Anwen Daniels, Councillor Anwen J Davies, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones, Councillor Linda Morgan and Councillor Elwyn Jones (ex-officio member)

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Cai Larsen in item 5 as he sat on the Board of Adra.

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams in item 5 as he was a tenant of Adra.

Councillor Gareth Tudor Morris Jones in item 7 because a member of his family was being cared for in one of Gwynedd's Nursing Homes.

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams in item 7 as his wife was receiving a domiciliary care service in Gwynedd.

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 1 July 2021, as a true record.

5. ONE-STOP SHOP FOR HOUSING MATTERS

Submitted – the One Stop Shop report by the Head of Department, requesting input from the Committee Members on commencing the consultation process. She referred to the One Stop Shop as a point of access for the residents of Gwynedd to be assisted with their housing needs.

The Cabinet Member added that it was very important to obtain information from the Councillors' perspective in terms of understanding local needs, and also having homes for individuals in the right places.

Members expressed their thanks for the report, and acknowledged that it had been a positive step in identifying the problem, as there was a feeling amongst members that there were many social houses in some wards and several individuals on waiting lists. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions, and the responses were noted as follows:

In terms of the concern that people who are already vulnerable encountered problems such as completing forms, being unsure who they should contact when their circumstances changed and not receiving an update, a member stated that they were pleased that the One Stop Shop would simplify the process and respond to these concerns. It was confirmed that the aim was for the One Stop Shop to be proactive and maintain better contact, and according to the Head of Housing and Property Department, to guide individuals and try to resolve problems in one place.

A member enquired about the detail of the 33 projects referred to in the Report and questioned what they aimed to do in specific areas, and the timeline. The Head of Housing and Property Department confirmed that there was a lot of work going on in the

background, such as on Council-owned land, and confirmed that a report would be submitted to the Council's Leadership Team in due course which would include a draft timetable.

She noted that the principle of a One Stop Shop was excellent and that everything would be available on-line/electronically, and any updates to a request would be made electronically, which would subsequently improve communication.

It was reported that the Third Sector was keen to be involved in such an arrangement.

A member mentioned yet again the complexity of the current system, and expressed concern about the perception that there was a shortage of places for individuals to live, and that making the application route easier for these people would be invaluable, but if there was no housing available for them, that was another problem entirely. It was confirmed that the Housing Action Plan would of course go some of the way to respond to the situation, but there was much coordination work to do between the Council and Housing Associations. Since the number of homeless people was very high, a member enquired about the arrangement to bring empty properties back into use, and noted Members' wish to be notified of any empty homes in their Wards.

Reference was made to the importance of the Housing One Stop Shop being staffed properly, with information being kept in one place.

It was confirmed that input from not only the Members but the Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament was essential at the start of the process, because individuals were also contacting their MS/MP.

The Committee gave its support to the way forward and thanked the Officers for their work.

RESOLVED: To accept the report on the concept of establishing a One Stop Shop for Housing and identify the next steps, requesting that the Department addresses the points raised.

6. GWYNEDD POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Submitted – the report on the approach for preparing and conducting the Gwynedd Population Needs Assessment, by the Projects Team Manager. She noted that the timetable was challenging because matters relating to the pandemic had had to take priority and officers had been diverted. She emphasised the importance of the report, noting that it must give a clear and accurate reflection of people's requirements, and that the documents could form the basis for grant applications. She further reported that the Act made it a requirement to publish regional reports, and as such the information relating to Gwynedd must be fed into the regional report. In light of the tight schedule, it was proposed to feed as much information as possible to the report by the end of October 2021, using the information that was already known, and then continue with the work. It was confirmed that the Government was treating the document as a continuous document.

The Senior Business Manager reiterated that it was a very challenging timetable, but it was a statutory requirement for us to complete the Assessment. He noted that the regional reporting was difficult, as the six Authorities had very distinct features to each other, but with one Health Board for the six areas.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions, and the responses were noted as follows:

A member expressed concern that the Needs Assessment asked questions about many important issues for the future, but the timetable for responding was tight. It was confirmed that the Well-being Act 2015 made it a Statutory Requirement to respond, and that the first assessment had been published in 2017. It was confirmed that the Department had been working on the assessment for six months by now, and it was important to keep an eye on the long-term future.

It was confirmed that there were no population figures available at present, as the purpose of the paper was to present the approach towards completing the Needs Assessment. Joint-working with the Health Board could prove challenging at times, but there were links in place for this piece of work.

A member noted concern about the shortage of nursing care beds in North Wales and hospital discharge plans in light of the fact that people lived longer, together with the Council and the Health Board's ability to respond to the Needs Assessment and Covid issues, and on top of all this, mental health matters.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Members for their useful comments, and referred to the themes in the comments in terms of the difficulty of compiling a 10-year projection. He noted that there were some matters requiring further research, and that there was a wider role here to try and summarise different experiences from different parts of the county.

RESOLVED: To accept the approach submitted for preparing the Population Needs Assessment 2022-2027, recognising the challenges linked to the timetable.

7. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICE WITHIN THE SAFEGUARDING UNIT

Submitted – the report on the Quality Assurance Service within the Safeguarding Unit, by the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager. The item was intended to provide details on how the Council monitored the County's adult care provisions, which included a range of organisations. She provided an overview of the team's work. She noted the concern that the Service was responsible for monitoring a number of establishments, but had only managed to monitor a limited number, and had been unable to visit the domiciliary care or day care services. Furthermore, she noted that during Covid, they had been unable to conduct the unannounced visits as would have happened usually, and instead the staff had made telephone contact with the providers.

She reported that five homes had been placed under the Escalating Concerns procedure over the past 18 months. The Quality Assurance Team had worked with each one to

prepare and implement improvement programmes in order to overcome problems and improve the quality of care services. One of the possible effects of the process was an embargo on admissions being imposed, which in turn had an impact on individuals and their families, and of course a lack of money coming in to sustain the business. She also reported that three homes in Gwynedd had closed over the past two years.

The Senior Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager referred to the Winterbourne View report, where a lack of monitoring was reported as being a factor, together with a lack of overview by the Commissioners.

She confirmed that visits to the various sites were conducted roughly every two years at present, but ideally we needed to visit every six months. She noted that when a problem arose, visits took place to try and prevent a site from being placed under the Escalating Concerns procedure. While this was absolutely essential, it did have an impact on the team's ability to monitor other services.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions, and the responses were noted as follows:

Concern was expressed that five services had entered the escalating concerns procedure, and concern about the stark difference in the frequency of visits by Gwynedd Council and a neighbouring authority. Members questioned whether there was a way of diverting resources, be those financial or other, to strengthen the service. The Senior Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager confirmed that, following a case of escalating concerns, the next stage was to formulate a development plan and give the service the opportunity to secure improvements. She stated that she shared the concern about the lack of resources, and referred to the unsuccessful bid made in 2020/21 for a budget to employ additional staff. She noted that the bid would be re-submitted this year.

Another Member noted that it was a difficult situation, and that the figures were very similar to the situation before 2016, but the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager stated that the difference by now was the good relationship with providers, area teams and the officers.

The Head of Service confirmed that the issue regarding capacity was significant, although he accepted that the sharing of resources to all services that were under pressure was challenging. He noted that this was an area of work where funding could be allocated, but they would still need more, but he reported that he was pleased to see the early signs of concerns being addressed immediately. He noted that resources across the Department were consumed when a home was in difficulties, and took staff away from other work. He noted that there had been some positive developments during the Covid period, such as greater trust between the Department and the providers.

He noted that the changes that had happened and changes that were afoot in domiciliary care demonstrated the need to monitor quality assurance effectively, but that they did not have the capacity to do this fully at present. He noted that temporary funding did not offer a long-term solution. He stated the importance of being aware of the team's work, and the

importance of feedback from providers, and noted his appreciation that the team was making every effort to work proactively.

Members gave thanks for the honest report which raised concerns, but they also gave thanks for the good collaboration, and the need to protect this collaboration.

The Committee stated that they were there to support, and would appreciate an update within six to nine months, although it was concerned as to how some issues could be resolved.

They gave thanks for the report and noted that there had been career development opportunities within the department, with a Home Manager having joined the Team, while one member of the team had moved to be a Provider Area Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being reiterated the fact that this was an honest report and that the observations would be taken into consideration, together with options within the Department.

It was agreed to accept the report, and to note the concern about the issue of capacity with the Cabinet and the desire for something to be done about it.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report that provided an overview of the work of the Quality Assurance Unit within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department
- 2) To note concern about the lack of staff capacity in the unit and the risks that could emerge in regards to the safety and well-being of those receiving care, the sustainability of the market and the consequent risks to the Council.
- 3) That the Chair would send an e-mail to the Cabinet members to convey the committee's concern about the lack of staff capacity and the need to secure adequate staff capacity in order to offer suitable support and monitor the quality of services.

The meeting commenced at 10:30 and concluded at 12:25

CHAIR