

No.

HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 6th December 2022.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, C.A. Cave, A.M. Collins, C.M. Cowpe, R. Fisher, S. Lloyd-Selby, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman, H.M. Payne, and C. Stallard.

Also present: Councillors H.C. Hamilton, W.A. Hennessy, and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

521 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

The Officer also reminded Scrutiny Members of the Council’s Call-in and Request for Consideration procedures as per paragraphs 7.24 and 7.16.3 of the Council’s Constitution.

522 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

523 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor N.C. Thomas declared in interest in Agenda Item No. 4 – Consultation on Proposals for Primary Legislation in Relation to Children’s Social Care, Continuing Health Care, Mandatory Report and Regulation and inspection (Reference) and Agenda Item No. 7 – Children and Young People Services Annual Placement Review, in that they were a member of the board of Governors at Headlands School Penarth, an Action for Children provision with residential placements. Councillor Thomas withdrew from the meeting during consideration of these items.

Councillor H.M. Payne declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 – Children and Young People Services Annual Placement Review. Llamau was mentioned as a potential provider of accommodation for 2023 in Appendix 1 page 10, Councillor Payne was a projects manager for Llamau in the Vale of Glamorgan. Councillor Payne withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

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Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 8 – Telecare Services Update in that she had multiple family members in receipt of Telecare support and one family member in receipt of a care package. Councillor Lloyd-Selby advised that she had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only on matters relating to Telecare and Care Packages at Vale of Glamorgan meetings. Telecare and Care Packages were not discussed during the item, so the Councillor remained in the meeting and took part in the vote to note the item.

524 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR PRIMARY LEGISLATION IN RELATION TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, CONTINUING HEALTH CARE, MANDATORY REPORTING AND REGULATION AND INSPECTION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 3rd November, 2022 as contained within the agenda was presented.

The purpose of the Cabinet report was to approve the consultation response for Welsh Government's proposals for changes to primary legislation in relation to children's social care, continuing health care, mandatory reporting and regulation and inspection.

Within the reference, Cabinet Members commented on the level of detail provided in the Council's response, which was comprehensive and resolved that the consultation response be referred to the Committee to ensure that Members of the Committee also had the opportunity to consider the consultation documents and subsequent response.

With no comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the consultation response submitted to Welsh Government, as attached at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report, be noted.

(2) T H A T both the Cabinet covering report and subsequent reference to the Committee be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the content of both the reference and appended Cabinet report to consider the consultation documents and response.

525 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17th November, 2022 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Director of Social Services.

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The Cabinet report set out how the draft Annual Delivery Plan had been developed, the proposed consultation (of which Scrutiny Committee was an important consultee) and the timetable for the Plan.

The Director highlighted that the Annual Delivery Plan for 2023-24 was aligned to the Council's four Well-being Objectives and detailed the activities that would be undertaken in 2023-24 to deliver those objectives. The Plan also detailed three critical challenges (associated with the four Well-being Objectives) which would be a key focus for the organisation in 2023-24, those being cost of living, Project Zero and organisational resilience.

With no comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the draft Annual Delivery Plan, attached at Appendix A to the Cabinet report, be noted.

(2) T H A T the consultation approach and timetable as well as the approach taken to date to draft the Annual Delivery Plan and the relationship with Annual Service Plans, as set out in the report, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the content of both the reference and appended Cabinet report to consider the draft Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.

526 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING MID YEAR REPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17th November, 2022 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Director of Social Services.

The Director advised that the Cabinet report provided a summary on the activity that had been undertaken in relation to corporate arrangements for Safeguarding and to provide assurance around safeguarding activity taking place across the Council. There was corporate responsibility to ensure that there were effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults at risk. The report provided a mid-year update on the effectiveness of those arrangements and the developments to date since the annual report was received by Committee.

Following the Director's presentation of the report, Councillor Lloyd-Selby referred to paragraph 5.1 of the covering report on the increased awareness of safeguarding and the responsibility to respond to concerns of individuals who may not be eligible for Council services. The Councillor requested that a further report be brought to the Committee on the subsequent significant pressures within social services teams, and consequently the Council's need to review processes to ensure clarity for people raising concerns and who within the Council responds to said enquiries/notifications about individuals who were considered 'at risk', but were not known or eligible for the Council's statutory services.

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In response, the Director advised that further detail as requested would be included within the next annual version of the report for referral to the Committee.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and Corporate Safeguarding mid-year report on the work undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults.

527 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES ANNUAL PLACEMENT REVIEW (DSS) –

The report was presented by the Head of Children and Young People Services and outlined the actions taken within Children and Young People Services with regard to placement provision for Children Looked After (CLA) and the priority actions for 2022/23.

As of 2nd December, 2022, 319 children were looked after by the Local Authority (not including care leavers) which was a 25% increase since the start of the national pandemic in March 2020.

48% of CLA were living at home with family, under a Court order, so the Council shared parental responsibility.

Where children and young people could not be supported to remain within their immediate families and needed to become looked after, the Council sought to provide a range of suitable placements.

Formal kinship fostering arrangements would be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it was necessary for the Local Authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children. Where a child's needs could not be adequately met through kinship arrangements, the majority would have their needs met best in a substitute family, preferably with in-house foster carers and, if not, with Independent Fostering Agency carers wherever possible living within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Residential care placements would be made only where the complexity of a child or young person's needs meant they were unable to live within a family setting or where a young person was subject to a Court Ordered Secure Remand. The Council was currently developing two new residential provisions with the third sector; a 4-bed in partnership with 'Action for Children' for 8–13-year-olds and a 2-bed in partnership with 'Llamau' for 14 -18-year-olds. Both provisions would be based in the Vale of

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Glamorgan and provide an additional 6 beds by July 2023 to be utilised by the Authority.

The Head of Service added that there were currently no children on remand placement within the Vale of Glamorgan.

In comparison to the number of kinship placements that had increased, the number of foster carer and adopter enquiries had decreased during the national pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. In response, the Council was adapting its methods of advertising to dispel myths around foster care and increase information shared on financial support available.

In conclusion, the Head of Service apprised the Committee on a number of initiatives that had been implemented/maintained during 2021/22 to address the key issues/objectives as detailed on pages 8-12 of the appended review as follows:

- An annual external placement audit,
- Rebranding of the internal foster carer recruitment strategy,
- Development of local residential provision,
- Establishment of a joint budget between Children and Young People Services and Learning and Skills, and
- Meeting of the CLA reduction project board.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report and subsequent questions from the Committee, the Officer added the following advice:

- In response to the 25% increase in CLA, the Authority had been able to evidence to Welsh Government an investment into Children Services over the last 2–3-year period. 14 Social Care Officer posts had been established across the Children Services teams which was crucial to increase capacity and resilience across the service and further support the Council's ability to 'grow its own' Social Workers.
- The increase in posts was a positive step however challenges remained in relation to recruitment to the sector and sickness in some teams. Social work vacancies had reduced by a third due to the introduction of 3 International Social Workers as well as 2 social work qualified individuals returning to practice.
- Sickness levels were monitored very carefully across the service in line with a sickness reporting policy and regular monitoring of sickness figures by the Head of Service and Humans Resources.
- The Vale of Glamorgan Council benefitted from a Marketing and Recruitment Officer based within its Fostering Team. This role allowed the Council to continually seek out creative opportunities to advertise and recruit through social media, local businesses, and local communities and/or events as well as dispel myths around the fostering process. The aim of any advertisement work was to generate quality enquiries that could lead to successful approval and matching.
- It was acknowledged that it would be helpful for the Committee to see further information on any differentials and context between Local Authorities in the South Wales area in comparison to the Vale of Glamorgan in terms of an

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increase in CLA numbers and that further information would be included in the next annual version of the report following discussions with the LAs in the adoption collaborative.

- The original completion timescales for the local residential provision were April 2023 for the 2-bed provision and June 2023 for the 4-bed provision however, the Council needed to also consider the timeframe between the building being completed and the provision being used as well as recruiting adequate staff to operate the provision.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T both the covering report and Vale of Glamorgan Council Children and Young People Services Annual Placement Review (Appendix 1) be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further Annual Placement Review report be received by the Committee in October 2023.
- (3) T H A T the report be referred to the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of both the covering report and Annual Placement Review to exercise oversight of the key statutory function.

(3) To ensure Members of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee have an opportunity to consider the matters in the report which relate to their portfolio areas.

528 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE (DSS) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (Q2) (1st April to 30th September, 2022) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2022/23) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Director of Social Services advised that all 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q2 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2022/23 and drew the Committee's attention to the achievements (slide 3) and areas for future focus and improvement (slide 5) specific to the Committee within Appendix A to the report.

Following the Director's introduction to the report and subsequent questions from the Committee, the Director with support from the Head of Children and Young People's Services and the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health added the following advice:

<p>PB/A002: Establish a task and finish group to identify and progress ways to effectively engage with young people on corporate issues.</p> <p>Who was involved with the participation practitioners' network?</p>	<p>This was a service plan action under the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, but the Director's understanding was that the action related to the participation and understanding of young people in relation to corporate issues and providing them an opportunity to contribute.</p>
<p>NS/A036: Improve the condition of the Council's local highway by delivering the Highway Resurfacing programme, including a programme of footway improvements for 2022/2023.</p> <p>Why was this labelled under the remit of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee?</p>	<p>The logic behind the label was the impact of noise pollution on public health and therefore the action fell loosely under the remit of the Healthy Living and Social Care Committee as well as other Scrutiny Committees.</p>
<p>PAM/028: Percentage of child assessments completed in time.</p> <p>Concerned by the red status and a lack of commentary.</p> <p>Completing assessments was a skill so what level of expertise did the Council have left amongst the remaining work force to complete assessments?</p>	<p>This point referred to assessments being received by the service prior to referrals being made having assessed if intervention by the service was required. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was not unique in relation to the figure not being where the Council would like it to be. Referrals were currently 16% higher than they were pre-pandemic. The Council now had a dedicated intake team to respond to assessments however, the team was significantly impacted by social worker recruitment issues. In response, the Council looked to utilise social officer staff within the intake team going forward.</p> <p>The Council was making a concerted effort to educate and explore assessment writing with staff to set the standards for writing assessments as well as the essential requirements. Assessment writing was a skill developed with experience and the Council would continue to utilise the skill set of experienced staff as well as embrace good working practices to develop the assessment writing process and embed a good time management culture.</p>

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	<p>The assessments caseload was a dynamic situation reflected by the nature of the service. Efforts would be moving more towards 'strength-based assessments' which involved assessing and utilising the strengths of individual families to support children in their care and eventually withdraw support. Irrelevant of the approach, staff required confidence and time to focus on writing assessments.</p>
<p>Selection of Performance Indicators under the remit of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee on page 123 of Appendix C but no targets are provided.</p> <p>If the performance indicator was subject to statutory deadlines, then there was an expectation that a target would be included; why were no targets provided?</p>	<p>It was not felt appropriate to set a target for the majority of the performance indicators in question however, the Council was measuring activity as per the commentary provided.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the phrasing of the Performance Indicator descriptions could be improved to better explain the context and that this would be looked at prior to the next performance monitoring report being received by the Committee.</p>

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.