

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 JULY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Thursday, 16 July 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith, Martin White, David Williams and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES: Senior Manager (Safeguarding & Commissioning), Senior Manager (Children & Workforce) and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Cabinet Member for Social Services), Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults) and Planning & Development Officer, Commissioning & Performance

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager, Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 January and 10 February 2020 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Andy Dunbobbin and Jean Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

62. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Officer (Social Services) presented the statutory annual report summarising his views on performance of the Council's social care functions and priorities for improvement. The report - which had been produced in an electronic friendly-style by Double Click Design & Print - would help to inform the Care Inspectorate Wales' (CIW) performance evaluation of Social Services.

Members were introduced to Emma Murphy, the Planning & Development Officer, Commissioning & Performance, who described the approach to evaluating outcomes from last year's priorities and identifying priorities for 2020/21. Whilst detailing the challenges and achievements, the report

highlighted the commitment and values of those working in social care to make a difference to people in Flintshire.

The Chair complimented officers and Double Click on the report.

The Chief Officer gave an overview of key achievements including the opening of Hwb Cyfle day care centre which had been shortlisted in three categories of the Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW) Awards 2020. He also highlighted continuing successes with the Progress for Providers programme and ongoing expansion of Marleyfield House care home. The launch of the Multi Systemic Therapy team - a new initiative in partnership with Wrexham and the first model of this type in Wales - would help to improve the lives of young people.

As Cabinet Member, Councillor Jones referred to the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and commended the achievements and the dedication of teams within the service to support adults and young people. She went on to thank Double Click who were preparing to re-open their business.

As a Board member of Double Click, Councillor Cunningham conveyed his pride in the business and thanked the Council for its support.

In welcoming the findings of the report, Councillor Mackie raised issues on the formatting and presentation of the document which officers said were being addressed. Officers noted Councillor Mackie's request that reports should be accessible on all types of portable electronic devices, including mobile phones, and that showing the data behind percentages and comparison with previous or national performance would help to provide context.

Councillor Ellis said that the report lacked information on support for individuals with autism and raised concerns about a specific case relating to the withdrawal of out of county specialist services.

In response, the Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults) said that the document would be reviewed to provide more clarity on autism services. She gave assurances that the issue regarding the specialist facility was being addressed and that officers were engaging with families who were affected.

Councillor Hinds expressed her appreciation to the team for their work during the recent challenging period. The Chief Officer would relay this to the teams.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor Dunbobbin.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report be noted.

63. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO FLINTSHIRE CARE HOMES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults) presented a report on the approach taken by Social Services to provide essential support to the local care home sector.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the national pressures on funding and recruitment in the care sector had been experienced in Flintshire. During the pandemic, the Council had further strengthened partnerships with providers through an unprecedented level of support to its 27 care homes to support some of the most vulnerable residents. The robust arrangements put in place during the pandemic included the allocation of a Contract Monitoring Officer to liaise with each care home and the 'share point' system to share information with key stakeholders. Regular multi-agency teleconference meetings with care providers to raise issues and share changing national guidance had been well received and would continue.

On the approach to testing, all care home employees and residents had been tested from May to June whether symptomatic or not. Since that time, employees in all care home settings, including extra care, were tested every week; the frequency would be reduced if the 'R' rate improved. The procedure in the event of a positive test in a care home required the entire establishment to be tested and entered into a period of isolation. Whilst 16 care homes in Flintshire were in a 'red' (positive cases) position at the peak of the pandemic, this number had now reduced to three. During peak of the pandemic, teams within Social Services had been deployed to provide additional support in care homes and weekend 'on call' arrangements had been extended to include senior officers.

The Senior Manager agreed to share presentation slides on PPE provision following the meeting. Deliveries were distributed twice a week to the 27 care home establishments by the group of volunteers trained in Social Services standards. The effectiveness of this approach through the North East Wales Community Equipment Service (NEWCES) had been recognised as best practice in a national report and shared with services across Wales.

Financial support from Welsh Government (WG) was used to support a 10% payment to care homes from mid-March to the end of June, to cover additional costs arising from the pandemic such as strengthening cleaning regimes, employee cover etc.

The Chair welcomed the continuation of weekly remote meetings and the timely return of test results. In response to a question on WG funding for care home employees, the Senior Manager advised a Task & Finish Group was reviewing recently issued guidance on its allocation.

Councillor White praised the Council's stance on the early closure of care homes in the County which helped to reduce the spread of infection.

During the discussion, Members expressed their appreciation to the teams within the Council and care homes for their efforts to keep residents safe. Councillor Gladys Healey asked that her thanks be passed to the Senior

Managers for Safeguarding & Commissioning and Children & Workforce for helping residents in her ward.

As suggested by Councillor Cunningham, it was agreed that a letter from the Chair would be sent on behalf of the Committee to volunteers who had helped to deliver PPE to care homes.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith, the Senior Manager clarified that PPE deliveries to care homes had commenced on 16 March.

Councillor Ellis praised the Chief Executive and Chief Officer for maintaining their position on the need for hospital testing prior to discharge to care homes.

The Chief Officer said that WG had supported Flintshire's position to help minimise the spread of infection. He paid tribute to his senior managers and teams for exceeding all expectations in their support to care homes during the pandemic.

As Cabinet Member, Councillor Jones expressed her pride in the social care sector including care home managers and social care employees, together with the Council's senior management team. She said that the support provided to care homes in Flintshire had been second to none.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Dunbobbin and seconded by Councillor Hinds.

RESOLVED:

That the approach of the Council in supporting the local Care Home sector be endorsed.

64. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 3pm)

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Chair