

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
26 OCTOBER 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 26 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley (Chair)

Councillors: Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Gladys Healey, David Mackie, Debbie Owen and Linda Thomas.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jean Davies and Hilary McGuill

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Dave Hughes and Paul Cunningham

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Antony Wren (for Councillor Marion Bateman and Councillor Linda Thew (for Councillor Carol Ellis)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager for Adults; Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning; Senior Manager Children and Workforce; Strategic Finance Manager; Strategic Finance Manager – Management Accounting and Principal Accountant.

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the joint meeting held with Education Youth & Culture Overview and Scrutiny held on 29 June 2023 were approved and moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September, 2023 were approved and moved by Councillor Debbie Owen and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

27. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and reported that there had been difficulties scheduling a date for the meeting with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and consideration was now being given to the January meeting which would be confirmed shortly. Also in addition to the other items on 7th December there would also be a video from Double Click to update members. She reported that following a request from the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee a report on Out of County Placements had been provisionally scheduled for a meeting on 6 June. Another option, which would be at the discretion of the Committee, would be for it to be presented at the joint meeting to be held on 27 June.

Councillor Mackie commented that as both meetings were being held in June he thought it would be appropriate if the item went to the Joint Meeting on 27 June. The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator agreed to add this to the joint meeting.

The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator advised members that the workshop being held at the Westwood Centre was likely to be scheduled for January and reported on the Action tracking as set out in the report.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor David Mackie seconded by Councillor Debbie Owen.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

28. BUDGET 2024/25 -STAGE 2

The Strategic Finance Manager introduced the report the purpose of which was to review and comment on the budget pressures and cost reductions under the remit of the Committee. She gave a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Setting 2024/25 which covered the following points:

- purpose and background
- additional budget requirements of the Council 2024/25
- additional budget requirement – ongoing risks
- overall position after initial solutions
- summary and conclusions
- next steps for the budget setting process 2024/25
- budget process Stage 2
- budget process Stage 3 – (Final)

The Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning, Senior Manager Integrated Services - Lead Adults, Senior Manager - Children and Workforce and Principal Accountant (Social Services) continued the presentation which covered the following points:

- Social Services Cost Pressures; and
- Social Services Budget Reductions

Overview & Scrutiny committees were being asked to rigorously review their portfolio cost pressures, efficiency options and associated risks, and to identify any additional areas of cost efficiency. A summary of outcomes from those sessions would be reported back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the November meeting which would be open to all Members. Following receipt of the provisional settlement on 20 December, Overview & Scrutiny meetings in January would need to consider further budget reductions required to meet the remaining budget gap in order for the Council to meet its statutory obligation of setting a legal and balanced budget in February 2024.

Councillor Linda Thew asked for the number of children receiving out of county placements. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) explained that the term out of county referred to children that the authority commissioned and cared for outside of the county's own provision. There were a number of children who lived in residential care homes in Flintshire which were classed as "out of county" because their support was provided out of county. There were 37 children currently in residential care that was not provided by the local authority but was commissioned. This did not mean that they were supported outside of Flintshire's geographical boundary. There were also 32 children supported by independent fostering agencies. The Out of County budget from a social care perspective was supporting 69 children every week with the addition of the educational costs.

Councillor Thew also referred to the cost for the new Senior Social Worker Posts and asked for a breakdown of the responsibilities that would be required for the role. In response, the Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Commissioning referred to the Social Worker Review and the additional pressure that this had created. It was explained that the pressure did not relate to the newly qualified social workers and experienced had remained the same. The changes related to the inclusion of the new Senior Social Worker grade with 12 posts in Children's Services, 16 in Adults Services and 1 in Safeguarding, 29 in total. The inclusion of this new GO7 grade had resulted in changes to the grades above and it was explained that Senior Practitioners became Deputy Team Managers with a 1 grade increase to GO8 with 17 in Children's Services, 13 in Adult Services and 1 in Safeguarding, 31 in total. The same process applied to Team Managers which were changed to GO9 with 8 Team Managers in Children's Services and 9 Adults Services with no changes in Safeguarding, 17 in total. This collective group related to the pressure.

Councillor Thew also asked how many children had Special Guardianship Orders. In response, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed that there were 63 Special Guardianship Orders at this time.

During a discussion around the recommendations outlined within the report, Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement) referred to the third recommendation and asked if this should be amended slightly to allow Members to forward any ideas of areas of cost efficiency to officers following the meeting.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) advised that the budget process was on-going with opportunities for suggestions to be included. He added that officers were open to ideas being presented to them at any time.

The Chair suggested that the recommendation around cost efficiency be amended to - that the Committee advise that no areas of cost efficiency had been identified at this stage.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey .

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Social Services portfolio's cost pressures be noted;
- (b) That the Social Services portfolio's options to reduce budgets be noted; and
- (c) That the Committee advise that no areas of cost efficiency had been identified at this stage.

29. NORTH WALES REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD (NWRPB) ANNUAL REPORT

The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning introduced the Report stating that it was a requirement for each Regional Partnership Board to submit their annual report to their Scrutiny Committee for overview and that any feedback she received today she would send to the Regional Partnership Board on their behalf. She advised that this was part of the requirement under Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 and that the purpose of the report was to give all partner agencies and Welsh Government an oversight of the work undertaken by the Regional Partnership Board, its activity during the year and priorities for the following year. She advised that the Regional Partnership Board had its own role to share a clear direction of travel for service development regarding integration of health and social care to insure the wellbeing of others.

She referred to key points in section 3 of the full appendix report:-

- Autism Code of Practice
- Capital
- Children and Young People Programme
- Commissioning
- Dementia Care pathway of Standards (Wales)
- Learning Disability Transformation Programme

- Market Stability Report
- Population Needs Assessment
- Regional Integration Fund (RIF)
- Research, Innovation and Improvement Coordination Hub
- Together for Mental Health Transformation Programme
- Workforce

Councillor Gladys Healey asked how long children had to wait before they saw a consultant concerning mental health issues and she was also concerned if children who received free school meals had a meal if they were sent home e.g. due to flooding. In response the Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning advised Councillor Healey that she didn't have the data to hand concerning the waiting list for child and adolescent mental health services but would make enquiries. She also explained that the provision of free school meals was part of the work fed into the market stability report and that the population needs assessment takes into account numbers of free school meals as well which helped as part of their planning. She added that each Local Authority and Partner Agency was responsible for its work as well as its collective piece of work and that Flintshire had worked hard to support individuals who relied heavily on the free school meal provision. She advised that whilst a large number of schools did close recently due to flooding they were purposely closed after 1pm so that lunch was provided.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) suggested that they pose the question to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board when they next meet concerning the Consultant waiting time for children with mental health issues. He also referred to 3.12 of the report concerning the mental health transformation programme and praised the community hubs that had been successful in supporting people to enable them to support themselves. He also wanted to make the Committee aware that Flintshire had taken the lead around social value and that it remained a key part of Flintshire's approach. He advised that the Regional Group, that the report referred to, was the only one in Wales that had been happening for the last 3 or 4 years which Flintshire County Council Chaired.

Councillor Thew questioned if the cost of the NWRPB was split equally between the 6 County's and how much Flintshire paid. The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning advised payments were not all equal and that they were based on the funding formula for the Local Authorities so contributions differed but there were also contributions from other key partner agencies and not just the 6 local authorities. She stated that Flintshire normally pay £123,000 per annum but last year they had a reduction of £50,000 which meant they paid £73,000 in 23/24 and that the expectation was that would possibly go back up to £123,000. She advised that it was referred to in the budget efficiency papers.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) added it was a statutory requirement of Welsh Government that they have a Regional Partnership Board and that it was also an investment of Officer time and resource as many Officers sat on many meetings.

In response to further questions from Councillor Thew the Chief Officer (Social Services) apologised if he misled her and explained that every region had had a Regional Partnership Board for the last 4 or 5 years and that what he said was that not everywhere had an Active Social Forum which was different but now everyone in Wales did have to have one and that they were playing catch up with them. He also suggested that that her comment on how the Barnett formula that penalised Flintshire which in effect increased Council Tax had an effect on Flintshire residents as they had to travel to a main hospital outside of Flintshire which made it difficult for some to attend appointments and visit patients should be another question that they post to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board when they next meet.

The first recommendation was amended at the request of the Chair and this was moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Mel Buckley. The second recommendation was moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Linda Thomas.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members note the complexity, breadth and depth of the work that is required to be undertaken by the Regional Partnership Board; and
- (b) That Members note the progress undertaken in 2022/23 on the work areas being taken forward through the North Wales Regional Partnership Board.

30. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.22 pm)

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Chair