

**Minutes of the Meeting of HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Thursday, 28 July 2022**

**PRESENT;** Councillor Caryl Roberts (Chair), Councillors Amanda Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Gwyn James, Sian Maehrlein, John Roberts & Carl Worrall.

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Rhodri Evans & Gareth Lloyd.

**Officers in attendance:** Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manger, Safeguarding; Alun Williams, Corporate Lead Officer, Policy, Performance and Public Protection; Carwen Evans, Corporate Manager, Public Protection; Heddwyn Evans, Environmental Health Manager; Llyr Hughes, Corporate Manager, Housing Services; Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer & Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services.

(10.00 - 10.22 am)

(10:30 – 11:58am)

*The meeting was suspended in response to technical issues and resumed at 10.30am.*

**1 Apologies**

- i. Councillors Ceris Jones (Vice-Chair), Mark Strong, Ifan Davies and apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer, Porth Gofal and Sian Howys, Corporate Lead Officer, Porth Cynnal apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

**2 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)**

**Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.**

Councillor Wyn Evans declared a personal interest under item 5.

**3 Independent Reviewing Service Performance Management Report qtr 3 2021 2022**

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the Independent Reviewing Service Report Quarter 3 2021/2022. Quarterly reports are taken to the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of an ongoing examination of the topic to ensure that the Local Authority fulfils its duties as the Corporate Parent. The report

includes national and local standards and targets used to measure outcomes for looked after children (LAC) and care leavers at the time of their review meeting and includes Welsh Government Performance Indicators.

On the basis of the information available and the views expressed during the review meeting, the IRO makes a professional judgement about the effectiveness of a child/young person's care plan in meeting their needs and may recommend changes to the care plan. During the review meeting, the IRO considers whether the child/young person requires assistance to identify relevant other people to obtain legal advice/take proceedings on their behalf. This action was not deemed necessary by the IRO for any child in the period. In addition, the IRO has regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights are being breached in any way and, if so, might make a referral to CAF/CASS Cymru. This action was not required at any of the review meetings in the period.

These reports are considered within Multi Agency LAC Quality Assurance Meetings which meet quarterly; these meetings provide an opportunity to identify and act upon performance and other issues with this area of work. The reports are also circulated and reviewed by Local Authority's Corporate Parenting Group, which takes place quarterly. Councillor Alun Williams proceeded to present a Summary of the Key Points noted on page 2 of the report.

Elizabeth Upcott noted they had not received any indication on how the new guidance on the changes to routine dental appointments would affect the service. Health professionals attend quality assurance monitoring meetings.

Councillor Alun Williams expressed disappointment with the announcement as the Council's key strategy with the Thought-age and Wellbeing Model was to provide early intervention and prevention, which should reduce the need for more expensive services further on.

The Chair highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the number of LAC over the past 2 years, as reflected on page 4 of the report. She commended the service for a clear and well-presented report.

Elizabeth Upcott explained that a similar trend has been seen nationally following the pandemic, and although the number of children in care in Ceredigion was low compared to other local authorities, there was a concern and preventions were being put in place for the short and long term. Reference was made to the Nature of the Placement Provision of Children Reviewed and the Legal Status of Children reviewed in the Quarter. Pathway planning was explained to the committee members. It was highlighted that the local authority continued to have a legal responsibility to provide care and support to care leavers who are between 16-25 years old. Despite not all in this age bracket wanting to engage, all care leavers were assigned a Personal Assistant.

It was noted that there was a lack of foster carers nationally and although there has been an all-Wales recruitment drive, finding placements remains a

challenge. There are ongoing management plans in progress to manage this.

Elizabeth Upcott explained that staffing remained challenging, and they were actively pursuing all avenues, senior management was involved with action plans and regular meetings were held. She clarified that the quarterly reports were a requirement, and it kept all informed of any trends and gave an oversight as corporate parents.

The Chair highlighted that recruitment of Social Workers and Senior Social Workers was included on the risk register. She reinforced the importance of quarterly reporting.

In terms of the significant increase in LAC numbers, Councillor Alun Williams noted that the number was expected to decrease moving forward as local authorities deal with the post-covid emergence.

The Chair appreciated that an increase in LAC numbers had been seen nationally but she was conscious that Ceredigion was a smaller authority and could be a little more susceptible to the risk.

Committee Members expressed their appreciation for the department and for their hard work in very challenging times.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to note the contents of the report and the levels of activity within the Local Authority.

#### **4 Housing Support Programme 2022 2026**

Llyr Hughes presented the background to the Housing Support Programme 2022-2026 as outlined in the report. The 4 background papers required under the current grant guidance were referred to, and it was noted that the 4-year plan identified 4 strategic priorities and also actions in moving forward. He clarified that the plan encompassed all housing needs, and it was underpinned by the overarching strategy.

In response to a query surrounding the new regulations for renting that will come into force on 1 December 2022, Llyr Hughes explained that landlords were leaving the market and others were increasing rent and bonds for the most vulnerable. There was a lot of anecdotal information circulating, but it was generally the picture across Wales.

In terms of 'no fault' evictions, Housing Options Service had a gateway service, and they were able to signpost people to the correct support. The Council are a part of Leasing Scheme Wales and aims to work closely with private landlords.

Members have seen an increase in enquiries from people who have received notices to leave private rented accommodation due to various reasons. Not only does this affect people's mental health but it reduces the availability of

rental accommodation. Ceredigion's Housing Options Service were commended for its support.

Members were reminded to direct residents to the Housing Options Service if in need of support with finding alternative accommodation. He appreciated there was a lack of affordable housing and that the housing allowances did not reflect private market rents.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to recommend the Housing Support Programme and a Statement of Needs for Cabinet approval.

**5 A report on the proposed fees for The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021**

Heddwyn Evans referred to the background and the current situation outlined in the report. It was noted that the proposed fees were in response to the increase in people selling pets privately and online rather than purchasing from a pet shop. A reference to the Current Situation was provided, which included that an introduction to the legislation was presented through the Democratic process in November 2021 and also Lucy's Law, which was already in place in England. The proposed fees listed on page 2 of the report reflects the additional work the authority has to undertake and the level of input from officers.

Reference was made to What is in and out of the scope: Selling Animals as Pets including the Business Test, In scope criteria, Guideline indicators of running a business of selling animals as pets, Out of scope criteria and Guideline indicators of "out of scope" activities as outlined in the report.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Heddwyn Evans. The main points raised were as follows:

- Heddwyn Evans explained that they monitor online advertisements and the frequency of advertisements by unlicensed breeders, which may indicate that breeding was done as a commercial activity.
- There are difficulties with traceability in terms of monitoring the welfare of dogs once they had ended breeding as there is no legislation to support this. Protection is in place for licensed breeders that do not allow more than one litter a year and 6 in a lifetime. In addition, there is a retirement strategy in place and microchipping was a legal requirement. Work is continually being done to protect the welfare of animals.
- In terms of who was categorized as a breeder, Heddwyn Evans clarified that authorities were looking at various scenarios to ensure there was consistency. Monitoring over a course of time is key to see if the activity is commercial and to make a profit. Each case will be considered on its own merit before a decision is done.
- Following concerns raised by members that families may have a litter a year for additional income, Heddwyn Evans clarified there were no intentions to licence people in this position but rather, people who had litters from multiple dogs in a year.

- HMRC Badges indicate that a £1000 profit may suggest a commercial activity- Heddwyn Evans highlighted that this would raise concerns given the increase in prices recently.
- Monitoring websites, identifying breeders and patterns of operation is time-consuming. The added enforcement has been included in the fee. If additional resources will be required to undertake the work, consideration will need to be given to this.
- Concerns were raised by members that the difference in the definition of domestic or commercial activity was a grey area.
- Members felt that having a family pet was important, to educate children on how to care for pets.
- Alun Williams, CLO, reassured members that the aim was to target unlicensed people who were clearly operating as dealers of pets and are profiting from their actions. Having a licensing and fee structure for these news licences was mandatory from a legal perspective.

Following questions from the Committee Members, it was agreed to recommend the report and the proposed fee structure for Cabinet approval.

## **6 Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022.

Matters arising: None.

## **7 Draft Forward Work Plan 2022-2023**

It was AGREED to note the Forward Work Programme presented subject to the following:

- A workshop specifically for the budget of the services under the committee's remit (Autumn)
- The Chair encouraged committee members to inform her of any issues they wished to explore as part of the committee's remit.

The Chair thanked all for their patience at today's meeting and apologised for the technical difficulties.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 October 2022**

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_