

Minutes of the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Wednesday, 24 May 2023

Present: Councillor Caryl Roberts (Chair), Councillors Ceris Jones (Vice-Chair), Amanda Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Gwyn James, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, John Roberts and Mark Strong.

Also in attendance: Councillors Euros Davies, Rhodri Evans and Gareth Lloyd.

Cabinet Members present: Councillor Alun Williams.

Officers in attendance: James Starbuck, Corporate Director; Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cymorth Cynnar; Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Gofal; Audrey Somerton Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Iwan Davies, Corporate Manager: Early Intervention; Heather West, Corporate Manager: Targeted & Short Term Services; Greg Jones, Corporate Manager: Corporate Service Support; Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 11.58am)

1 Welcome and Apologies

- i. Councillor Carl Worrall apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Gwyn James apologised for leaving the meeting early.

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.

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests (including whipping declarations) from Committee Members.

3 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection Report and Action Plan

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the CIW Inspection Report and Action Plan. CIW undertook an intense evaluation of performance across Adult and Children's Service from 27 February 2023 to 10 March 2023. The report was published on 18 May 2023. Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the domains of the inspection evaluated were People - Voice and Control, Prevention, Well-being and Partnership.

Five Inspectors participated in the inspection, which was facilitated virtually and in person. During the evidence gathering, 14 individuals engaged in the process including officers, Elected Members, service users, carers, and statutory and third-sector partner organisations.

In addition to case file audits, key policies and developments were scrutinised. This included supervision files and the revised policy, compliments and complaints, the draft Quality Assurance Framework, the Occupational Therapy consultation and the revised Safeguarding and Mental Wellbeing and Porth Cymorth Cynnar structures. Observations of strategic and operational meetings took place online and face-to-face. There was an emphasis on the experience of children, carers and their families and how the service listens to their views and the Inspectors were actively seeking to identify the participation of service users in assessments and plans by articulating their own care requirements. The Inspectors were very keen to understand and appreciate the benefits of the Through Age Wellbeing model.

The initial feedback provided on 16 March 2023 was very pleasing, and the report was complimentary to the Services provided to the citizens of Ceredigion. There were no areas of non-compliance identified during the Inspection. An overview of the key findings and evidence was provided. An Action Plan has now been formulated to respond to the recommended improvements outlined by CIW in the report. The overwhelming majority of the actions were already in play as the matters identified by CIW were being addressed before the inspection.

All staff involved with the service were congratulated on their performance as highlighted in the report.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- It was difficult to compare with other local authorities due to several factors such as population, staffing levels, number of cases and rurality. The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Cynnal believed the service was in the upper quarter of Wales.
- Given the challenges with recruitment, every provision possible was being explored to retain and recruit staff. Employing overseas workers was an option used elsewhere to support the Social Care sector and had not been utilised in Ceredigion. The difference in cultures and languages were highlighted; therefore, caution was needed if there was an intention to explore this option further.
- As other local authorities increased the salary for Social Care staff, there was more competition, and so a pay review would need to be undertaken soon which would lead to implications for the Council's budget. Welsh Government have recognised the importance of equal pay across Wales, but this would prove challenging financially too.
- It was acknowledged that there was a mixed approach in Ceredigion at present, with a combination of Council and third-sector agency workers. To reduce the number of agency workers, not only did pay and conditions need to be considered but a successful CIW report could be used as a recruitment tool.
- It was recognised that staff learnt from one another, but officers felt that enforcing staff to attend offices would not necessarily be helpful. During the past few months, staff had learnt to strike a balance between working

from home and in the office, teams were encouraged to hold meetings face to face and staff were able to book desks together. The hybrid working model would be reviewed in July 2023.

- Prompt feedback was vital for partner agencies and would be addressed along with supporting partner agencies with understanding the Through Age and Wellbeing Model.
- Research has shown that people reverted to their first language in times of crisis. Due to this, providing training locally was key to encouraging more local people to work in the sector and remain locally. At present, the local authority worked with The Open University to train Social Workers and work was being undertaken with Aberystwyth University.
- The Service was constantly being monitored and they worked in a climate where continuous improvement was required. Being transparent with CIW around the areas of improvement was important, and if not addressed, the areas would become an enforcement issue.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed that:

- The draft Action Plan to address the issues identified in the CIW report is accepted as a proportionate response to recommendations contained in the report.
- The Action Plan to be monitored after six months through the Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee and after one year to maintain progress and momentum through to completion.

4 National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services

Councillor Alun Williams presented the report for National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (local authority) Adoption and Fostering services. The National Adoption Service has been in existence since 2014 and has enabled significant change and improvement in adoption services across Wales. Its structure and governance through national, regional and local arrangements were agreed by all councils at that time; a review in 2018 led to proposals to streamline governance and improve accountability. Some of these e.g. creating a Combined Governance Board (bringing together the Advisory Group and Governance Board required by the legislation) and a new Partnership Agreement to replace the original functional model have been already implemented. The establishment of Foster Wales provides the opportunity to join the arrangements for adoption and fostering into one directorate operationally and the governance for both activities to be joined.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- Working regionally and nationally was considered a sensible way forward.
- Adoption numbers have reduced nationally for several reasons. The adoption service in Carmarthen and local officers were capable of working to demands and most of Ceredigion's children who were adopted remained within the region due to the number of adopters and also cultural reasons.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed:

- To seek agreement that the Ceredigion signs the Joint Committee Agreement for the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales.
- This paper progresses through the full governance processes to be fully endorsed.

5 Domiciliary Care Overview

Councillor Alun Williams presented a report on the Councils position and approach to Domiciliary care. Ceredigion County Council commissions Domiciliary Care for Service Users, who by reason of vulnerability or other circumstances have been assessed as requiring such care in line with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The report detailed the statutory background to Domiciliary Care, the work undertaken across Wales to develop the service nationally and the situation locally in Ceredigion. Reference was given to Ceredigion's Initiatives to support the Domiciliary Care Market from 2022/23 onwards and the current situation.

Ceredigion County Council Targeted Care & Enablement Service was subject to Inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales in October 2022 and received an exemplary report published in November 2022, with the inspectors offering the highest praise for the service model and delivery.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- The Social Care workforce across Wales was recognized as challenging. Within the 15 Point Pledge as part of the new Domiciliary Care Framework 2023, the aim was to pay all domiciliary care providers a rate more aligned with the Home Care Association (HCA) recommended hourly rate.
- All providers must pay a real living wage under the legislation. The fee increase to £26.50 per hour for providers acknowledged the increase in the cost of living and fuel. This fee covered wages, pay enhancements and training costs. It was noted that different providers managed travelling costs from property to property differently and there had been various initiatives on offer to support them.
- Signing up to the 15 Point Pledge would demonstrate providers' commitment to supporting the workforce. It was suggested that monitoring providers should be key in moving forward with the 15 Point Pledge. A Quality Assurance Framework for Social Care was being developed; this would involve dedicated staff who would continually monitor providers, the delivery of the contracts and the quality of service.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to note the report, subject to receiving an update to the 15 Point Pledge in April 2024.

6 Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales

Councillor Alun Williams presented the Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales. In 2018, Welsh Government invited bids from Local Authorities and Health Boards to become pathfinders for the Early Years

Integration Transformation Programme. An application was submitted by Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion Local Authorities alongside Hywel Dda Health Board to become Pathfinder areas. Funding was secured (2019 - 2024) to pilot and test approaches to Early Years Integration Transformation and a Maternity and Early Years Steering Group was formed. In January 2021, Pembrokeshire successfully applied to join the Pathfinder Programme and therefore all Local Authorities in the Hywel Dda footprint have been involved in the Programme. In 2021/ 2022 representatives of the three Local Authorities and Hywel Dda Health Board worked together to formulate a Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales.

The strategy focused on support in the first 7 years of a child's life, recognising the importance of these formative years in shaping the child's future health and well-being and aims to promote collaboration between support services both at pre-birth and Early Years stages. The strategy is located within the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales Website, which is a collaboration between Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire local authorities, Hywel Dda University Health Board and third sector partners. Based upon extensive consultation with Service Users and Early Years Professionals, the Strategy for West Wales was written with the intention of promoting excellent services at every stage of Maternity and Early Years.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- There were recruitment challenges generally, but vacancies were either out to advert or had been appointed to in Porth Cymorth Cynnar. When staff were appointed, training was provided as required to ensure they had the correct skills for the role.
- It was recommended that when an agenda item involved Hywel Dda University Health Board, Councillor Rhodri Evans as the elected member of the Board should be informed.
- Through Age Wellbeing, Support & Care were in the process of launching a new website which would clearly outline the services available to the public. It was suggested and agreed that a small group of Members could view the website before it became live, to provide their views and feedback.
- Staff were based in family centres across the county and the needs of the public were considered when sessions were being prepared; information on these sessions was shared widely including through the relevant social media sites.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to endorse the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales.

7 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising therefrom

It was agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2023.

Matters arising: It was clarified that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation from the Committee Members to write to Ms Elin Jones, Senedd Constituency Member and to the four regional Senedd Cymru Members expressing concern with providing sufficient housing in Ceredigion. Any updates would need to be monitored.

8 To consider the Forward Work Plan

It was agreed to note the contents of the Forward Work Programme presented.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2023

Chairman: _____

Date: _____