
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11.12.14

Present: **Councillor Peter Read (Chair)**
 Councillor Beth Lawton (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams and Hefin Williams.

Co-opted Members with a vote on education issues only: The Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

Others invited: Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)
 Councillor R H Wyn Williams (Cabinet Member for Care)
 Councillor Mair Rowlands (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Leisure)

Also in attendance: Morwenna Edwards (Corporate Director), Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Glenda Lloyd Evans (Older People Service Manager), Nicola Hughes (Project Officer – Promoting Quality in Secondary Schools), Elfyn Vaughan Jones (Senior Advisor, GwE Challenge), Alwyn Jones (Senior Advisor, GwE Challenge), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager, Corporate Commissioning Service), Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Huw Edwards, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts, Mrs Rita Price (The Catholic Church), Mr Neil Foden (Teachers' Union).

2. << CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) Best wishes were sent from the Committee to Councillor Huw Edwards who was absent because of ill-health.
- (b) The staff and pupils of Ysgol Hafod Lon were congratulated on an excellent Christmas Concert which had been held recently.
- (c) The following were welcomed to the meeting:-
 - Councillor Mair Rowlands in her new role as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Leisure
 - Councillor Gweno Glyn as a new member of the Committee
 - Mr Marc Roberts and Ms Vicky Poole, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (for Item 5 – CSSIW Annual Report)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones declared an interest in Item 6 (a) Savings – Adapting Providers’ Agreements as she was the Chief Executive of Cwmni Seren. The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the Chamber during the discussion on the item.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of a meeting of this Committee held on 2 October 2014.

4. ANNUAL REPORT (CSSIW)

A review and evaluation of Gwynedd Council’s annual performance was submitted by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

(a) The report identified where there had been progress and the fields that needed improvement in the field of Social Services. Mr Marc Roberts (CSSIW) reported that there was evidence that the Social Services’ managers and staff had worked hard and some aspects of the plans were very challenging with an enormous work programme to be realised in accordance with the budget. An improvement had been seen in the arrangements of Social Services along with the Council’s vision.

(b) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (i) As a consequence of all the amendments in legislation and their requirements, it was questioned how it could be ensured that improvements were implemented in accordance with the needs and requirements of users. In response, the Corporate Director noted that the residents of Gwynedd would be placed at the forefront of what was being implemented, although it meant a change for users but by collaboration the best service would be ensured for individuals.
- (ii) Concern was expressed that savings would not be realised without affecting services to individuals and it was difficult to make cuts.
- (iii) In response to an enquiry regarding guidance and responsibility for achieving the aspirations of the CSSIW, it was noted that it was crucial for Members to support the modernisation of the Service, to influence the Health Board and to monitor how the Service dealt with users.
- (iv) In terms of influencing the Health Board, it was noted that this had been difficult for the Council in the past and it was trusted that there would be robust collaboration in future in fairness to the users.
- (v) In response to an enquiry regarding the effect of the changes on the community domiciliary care framework, the Corporate Director explained that there would be a change in the pattern of users’ needs since the cost per capita for individuals with profound needs to remain at home were high. It had to be ensured that the Health Board contributed to complex packages that existed now. More consideration had to be given to future projections and targeting for the future to ensure the best benefits for users from the money.
- (vi) In response to an enquiry regarding the role of the Corporate Director, the CSSIW representative noted that he was aware that progress had been made and a further discussion would be held during the year with the Corporate Director and the Chief Executive in accordance with guidelines regarding responsibilities and to agree on processes and protocol, bearing in mind also that there would be implications resulting from changes following the publication of the Social Services Bill.

- (vii) It was explained in the context of a Strategic Plan with the Health Board regarding children's mental health, that regular meetings were held on a managerial level, examining the issues of access to services for children and young people and the availability of the services for them locally and outside the county.
- (viii) There were concerns regarding additional work pressure resulting from staff absenteeism. In response, it was noted that arrangements were in place for the Corporate Director and the Adult Services Managers to bridge the gap with an external expert leading on specific projects.
- (ix) Assurance was requested that the elected Members received information regarding complaints and it was suggested that it would be worthwhile submitting an initial paper at the preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the complaints procedure processes and to include the categories of complaints, the timetable and how the information was disseminated to Members.

Resolved: (a) to accept and note the content of the report and to request the Corporate Director:

- (i) To submit a brief initial paper at the preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2015 regarding the complaints procedure processes and to include categories and a timetable for complaints. (ii) To submit an update on the work programme for the improvement fields that had been identified by the CSSIW by March 2015.**

5. SAVINGS

- (a) A report was submitted by Councillor Peter Read, Chair of the Savings Scrutiny Working Group, which had been considering efficiency proposals from all the departments to try to contribute to the financial deficit of £50m in the Council's permanent revenue budget up until 2017/18. It was noted that some efficiency savings proposals that were intended to be implemented from 1 April 2015 could have a direct effect on vulnerable people.
- (b) The Cabinet Member for Care reminded the committee of the current financial climate and it had to be realised that there was a need to consider making substantial savings across Council services and the Service had no choice but to propose savings to the provisions below.

(i) Savings – Adapting Providers' Agreements

The Senior Business Manager explained that a proposal had been submitted not to increase fees in the field of domiciliary care and supported accommodation for the next three years which would mean an efficiency saving of £942k.

Following further work on the figures, the relevant legislation and consideration of the categories of care services purchased from external providers and comparing the fees with neighbouring authorities, savings of £308k were proposed for 2015/16. This meant fees would not be increased in the next financial year and external providers were expected to make their own efficiency savings arrangements. In reaching the above figure, it was noted that evidence was available for each category that the fees were generous and it was felt that the service could be maintained sustainably without increasing fees. However, the matter would have to be examined further beyond 2015/16 and more extensive collaboration would be required with the external market prior to offering recommendations, with the exception of two fields, namely, Direct

Payments (where the payments per hour were substantially higher than other authorities) and Respite Care.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

- (a) Assurance was given that there had been discussions with the third sector via the Provider Forum and the Learning Disabilities Consortium.
- (b) Concern was expressed that there would be too much pressure on the external market and that they would go out of business which would then mean that there would be nobody to provide the service
- (c) In response to a concern regarding the providers' commitment to ensuring that the service remained consistent for the client since there would be no increase in the fees, the Senior Business Manager noted that it was expected that the service would be of the same standard but providers had noted that there was a general feeling that more work and discussions had to be undertaken on any savings beyond 2015/16.
- (d) Concern was expressed that private companies could refuse to provide packages for individuals that would be too expensive for them to provide and as a consequence, the Council would have to provide them.
- (e) In response to an enquiry regarding the monitoring measures, assurance was given that this would be achieved through monitoring contracts, the complaints procedure, interviews with providers and forums and the CSSIW to ensure the safety of users.
- (f) There were difficulties in service provision in the most rural areas of the County and should consideration be given to keeping the service within the Council so that it was possible to monitor internally rather than externalising the service with the danger of companies folding should fees be frozen.

Resolved: to Approve:

- (i) **To review the original figure of £942k as an efficiency saving and to restate the figure at £373k to be implemented over the next three years as follows:**

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
£308k	£37k	£28k

- (ii) **To reconsider all the fees annually and to consider the relevant context and the status of the market at the time.**
- (iii) **That the efficiency savings are fully compliant with the necessary legal requirements.**

(ii) Savings – South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Service and Women’s Aid Bangor Service

It was corrected that the South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Service also included a service for men and that it was not only South Gwynedd Women’s Aid being considered as noted in the report.

- (a) The Head of Children and Supporting Families Department reported that the service had been providing a contribution by agreement to the South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Services and Bangor Women’s Aid Service to fund part-time children’s workers’ posts. It was explained that the Service was required to realise an efficiency savings target of £2.4m by 2017 out of a budget of £14m before reaching the discussion on cuts. Of the number of agreements that the Service had, this provision was the only agreement that was not a statutory requirement. The effect that cutting the service would

have on children and young people had been considered and a decision had been reached that the risk was lower than having to delete 1½ social workers' posts within the Department.

- (b) The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Leisure endorsed the above and emphasised that Gwynedd was one of only a few local authorities that provided core funding for organisations.
- (c) An opportunity was given to the Gorwel Manager, South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Services to respond and she expressed concern that the service was receiving cuts from other sources that equated to £82k, which was nearly a quarter of the budget. Consideration also had to be given to the fact that the service dealt with the most vulnerable people in communities and many people reported that cases of abuse were increasing. Further concern was expressed regarding who would be dealing with the number of children on the register who received a one-to-one service.
- (d) During the ensuing discussion, individual members made enquiries and the responses were as follows:
- Should a case of domestic abuse happen outside office hours/at weekends, the Police would contact the Social Services Night Team in accordance with the statutory requirements as would be done during normal working hours. It would be the Council's responsibility as the lead authority, jointly with the Police, to investigate child protection cases.
 - Should a family need a refuge the Domestic Abuse Service would be available twenty four hours a day with direct access for families.
 - If the cut was agreed the additional post of a Children's Officer would not continue in Dolgellau.
 - Although the work of the Domestic Abuse Service was not statutory, it was explained further that the service provided support for children and families before they were referred as statutory cases. Work was undertaken to save bringing Social Services in and to save bringing children into care.
 - If it was safe for a family to remain in their locality, this was done but some families were also placed outside Gwynedd. The majority of those homed were local.
 - The impact of the cut to the Domestic Abuse Service would mean that more than one post involving working with children and young people in the community across Gwynedd would have to be abolished.
- (dd) Concerns were expressed by members of the committee regarding the number of assaults and cases that the service dealt with and the danger of the loss of investment in the health and future of children and young people.
- There were an enormous number of assaults in the home and the care received from the Domestic Abuse Service was invaluable and considering the removal of their funding was unsatisfactory, considering the effect this Service had on the lives of children and young people.
 - The investment was for the health and future of children and young people.
 - There was a need for more information regarding the funding details of the Domestic Abuse Service, including how many people had received their service along with the placements.

Resolved: To ask the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Leisure to submit the following observations of the committee to the Cabinet to ensure

that the Cabinet is completely clear about the effect of any decision that it makes:

- i) The Service is an important part of the fabric of services for a substantial number of vulnerable children in the county and those numbers should be known before the Cabinet makes its decision.**
- ii) There is a strong preventive element to the work that saves work and higher costs for the statutory services which the Council is obligated to provide.**
- (iii) Financial information must be received regarding the wider impact of this saving on the budgets of the bodies in question, including their ability to attract further grants, before making any decisions.**

6. REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE EDUCATION QUALITY PROMOTION PROJECT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS SINCE JUNE 2014

The report of the Cabinet Member for Education was submitted on the progress of the education quality promotion project in secondary schools since June 2014 that stemmed from the recommendations of the Education Quality Scrutiny Investigation following a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

During the discussion the following issues were considered:-

- (i) There was a suggestion that there was a shortage of Mathematics teachers as well as supply teachers and some experts in the field were offering private tuition rather than teaching. It was confirmed that there was a problem in attracting Mathematics specialists to teaching posts and this was true throughout Wales and it would be a matter that would be raised with the Welsh Government. Assurance was given that the Education Service was trying to address the problem by collaborating with Bangor University to find whether it would be possible to re-train teachers of other subjects to teach Mathematics. There was a need to convince Mathematics students who were not confident in Welsh, that there was support for them to develop their language skills.
- (ii) It had to be realised that there was a general shortage of teachers in other subjects also, e.g. music. In response, the Cabinet Member for Education noted that there were good practices in Gwynedd schools and subject specialists were to be persuaded to share their expertise amongst each other.
- (iii) It was noted that more attention should be given to bridging between the primary and secondary sectors in order to raise educational standards but assurance was given that several successful bridging projects were ongoing. Reference was made to a practice in one catchment area where a weak performance in the field of numeracy in the primary sector had been identified and there had been collaboration with the primary sector in specific fields as a result.
- (iv) In response to a concern regarding the perceived decline in GCSE results, the Senior Advisor, GwE Challenge noted that the historical performance of Gwynedd as a county had been strong but there was polarisation in the performance of individual schools. Reference was made also to the pendulum effect in schools where the group was small. The field has been addressed this year and there were marked improvements in several schools that had been targeted for support. It was also noted that performance indicators and amended benchmarking had been introduced over the last couple of years with specific focus on the principal indicator (TL2+), along with higher expectations by the regulatory body, Estyn.
- (v) In terms of leadership, it was noted that attention had to be given to the number of vacant Head Teachers' posts and to develop different models in circumstances

when Heads failed to be appointed, such as appointing a Catchment Area Strategic Leader to support the primary sector also.

- (vi) In terms of the elements that contributed to good leadership, the Project Manager explained that she had submitted a report to Head Teachers, which was a comprehensive document detailing aspects of good practice that would be possible to put into action in schools. There was a similar list for governors who could be valuable in providing a 'critical friend' for schools.
- (vii) NPQH Qualification – it was noted that two senior managers from the secondary sector and seven/eight from the primary sector had been chosen to follow the NPQH qualification this year. It was noted that the Council had a scheme to develop leadership at every level and the potential of individuals had to be identified early.
- (viii) Some concern was expressed regarding all the requirements placed on heads which meant that they worked substantial hours beyond the teaching hours. It was felt that there was no incentive for teachers to apply for posts of Heads/Deputies because of the enormous work pressure on Head Teachers.
- (ix) In terms of TL2+ performance, the position of Gwynedd was the fifth highest nationally and the Capped Score points was the highest.
- (x) In the context of elements of the project that were coloured yellow and red, it was trusted that several of them would develop to be coloured green but it had to be borne in mind that the original scheme had been amended and some elements would not be implemented in the same way.
- (xi) It was noted that Estyn, as part of the Authority's inspection, had requested to submit a report after their recent post-inspection visit.

Resolved: (a) To approve the progress made thus far but there is a need to continue monitoring in the future.

(b) To accept and to welcome Estyn's specific request to submit a report at the next meeting of the Committee.

7. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT SERVICE (GwE) WITH GWYNEDD SCHOOLS

A report was submitted by the Senior Advisor, Gwynedd/Anglesey Challenge Hub of the Schools Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) on the work of GwE with Gwynedd schools.

- (a) Members were guided through the content of the report, providing the background information on the GwE organisation, Gwynedd's commitment to the service, the commissioning budget targeted for specific schools, the structure of the Team, performance data across the Key Stages, a summary of Estyn's findings from inspections during the period of GwE's operation, data in terms of categorisation of schools in the primary and secondary sectors, the response of stakeholders regarding the quality of GwE's work.
- (b) During the discussion, the following matters were considered:-
 - (i) In response to an enquiry, it was explained that the criteria for the green categorisation had been tightened which made it more difficult to place schools in this category and it specifically involved the performance of groups of learners such as, free school meals learners, the gap between boys and girls, children with additional learning needs. It was explained that there were three steps in the process of designating a category for a school, namely:

- The Welsh Government placing every school in a data Category (1-4)
- GwE findings locally by scrutinising and observing lessons, discussion with leaders resulting in a judgement on the quality of leadership (A-D)
- Designating a colour category for schools in terms of offering support.

The result of Stage 1 of the process had placed a larger number of Gwynedd schools in Quartile 4 but there were no balanced findings for the standards until all stages of the process had been completed.

- (ii) It was agreed that the free school meals indicator was a very raw indicator of school performance but it was one which was driving all discussions with a number of stakeholders.
- (ii) The Cabinet Member for Education added that a procedure had been established recently of holding discussions within the Quality Group where specific schools were targeted and any steps the Authority could take regarding support were discussed and the schools were challenged.
- (iv) Great pride was expressed in the fact that specialists had been appointed to work with a cluster of schools and this was to be congratulated and stakeholders had a much more positive attitude towards GwE's activities and saw it as a resource to assist schools.
- (v) It was appreciated that an example could be seen of the nature of the support and the impact of the support on red category schools and this would be useful to share with governors.
- (vi) It was acknowledged that transparency in the relationship between GwE, schools and governors was totally necessary and governors should have access to monitoring reports. It could be seen from the best practices that governors' representatives joined and were a core part of the monitoring process and through this they had a better understanding of the scrutiny process. It was also felt that elected Members had a core role to change the mindset within some governing bodies especially in some schools that were designated in the red category.
- (vii) In response to a concern that some mentoring links meant too much travelling, it was explained that collaboration was important and there was an expectation in the current system for every Head Teacher to take on a wider responsibility for children's education. The system was seen to be effective in several areas where schools helped each other.
- (viii) In response to an enquiry regarding the success/failure of schools in realising targets, it was explained that several schools with a small number of children established an aspirational target rather than realistic and achievable targets. It was noted further that it was intended to introduce a work programme to further address assessment, setting targets, tracking and intervention. It was acknowledged that some schools set targets that were too challenging and this did not facilitate the work of identifying and addressing underachievement effectively.

Resolved: to accept the report and to note the emphasis placed on strengthening the understanding of collaboration.

8. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS STRATEGIC REVIEW

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that it was intended to submit proposals from the review of the above field to the Cabinet in February/March 2015. The Committee was requested to establish a Task Group to scrutinise the Additional Learning Needs Strategy during the consultation period in January 2015.

Resolved: to elect the following members to serve on the Task Group:

Councillor Elin Walker Jones

Councillor Gweno Glyn

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths

The Reverend Robert Townsend

CHAIRMAN