
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28/01/16

Present:

Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair)

Councillors: Aled Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Siôn Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Gareth A. Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Hefin Williams and R H Wyn Williams.

Officers: Gareth James (Members' Manager - Support and Scrutiny) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Also in attendance:

For Items 4,5 and 6 below

Councillor W. Gareth Roberts, Cabinet Member Adults and Health
Aled Davies, Temporary Head of Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department

For Item 4 below

Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member – Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality
Arwel Wyn Owen, Senior Housing Manager
Eliw Llŷr, Strategic Housing Manager

For Item 6 below

Rhion Glyn, Senior Executive Officer

Apologies: Councillors Alan Jones Evans, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Siân Wyn Hughes, Dewi Owen, Peter Read, Mair Rowlands (Cabinet Member Children and Young People), Neil Foden and David Healey (Teaching Unions) and Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director)

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) The Chairman welcomed Councillor Gareth A. Roberts to his first meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.
- (b) A speedy recovery was extended to the Chair of this Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Peter Read, and his fellow Councillors looked forward to seeing him back with them soon.
- (c) Reference was made to the death of Councillor Eddie Dogan and condolences were extended to his family in their sad loss.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee that took place on 26 November 2015.

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd reminded the committee of the need for the Head of Education to submit a written report to this Scrutiny Committee stemming from the minute at the previous meeting under the heading Urgent Items - Schools Savings Target.

4. OLDER PEOPLE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

(a) A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health together with a draft strategy for the accommodation of older people and he drew attention to the strategy's main priorities namely:

- Support individuals to stay in their homes for as long as possible
- Find specific geographical areas where it is likely that the demand will be high
- Ensure suitable accommodation for older people
- Ensure that Gwynedd's older people are aware of the accommodation options that exist within the County and that accessible information is available

(b) The Senior Housing Manager referred to the strategy's aim that sets a direction in terms of the population needs. Specific areas were looked at and the service that is currently available. The Committee was reminded of the challenges facing the Council as well as the growth in population. There was a growth in the population of those aged 85+ with a high percentage living alone and dependent on social care. It appeared that if the accommodation was suitable for the individuals then they could remain in their own homes and the cost for the service was less.

The trends were considered and it was seen that there was a lack of provision in some areas particularly in the coastal communities. In addition, it was noted that there was a significant growth in the number of patients with dementia and this caused concern for the future and a balance would be sought between the current provision and future requirements.

Eight areas had been identified regarding the pressure on the population and it was seen that in some areas the population was older, some young people were moving out and the pattern of the influx of people was by now fairly consistent. In terms of the eight areas, the type of appropriate provision that would fully meet with the need was considered. They would look at the future role of the residential sector as there were more residential / nursing beds than sheltered housing provision.

(c) The Strategic Housing Manager noted that the strategy had long-term and financial implications and a partnership with a housing association would have to be considered that would in turn be dependent on grants, etc.

(ch) Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the strategy and they highlighted the following points:

- Why cannot the Council consider dual registration especially as the Health Board / CSSIW support this?
- Concern regarding the reduction in the number of traditional residential beds with the beds now transferred to the Health Board, and as a result there was no place for

local people specifically in Blaenau Ffestiniog, with no land available to establish additional sheltered accommodation for the needs of local people.

- Concern when private residential care homes were closing, that the responsibility fell on the Council to keep the home open until the residents could be re-located.
- That the areas specified in the strategy were under huge pressure with people moving there to retire and should the strategy not refer to a financial recognition to be able to cope with the situation.
- A request had been made for further details regarding the number of people over 65+
- Disappointment that the action plan had not noted the timetable and who would be responsible for action.
- That there was a lack of direction within the strategy regarding the size of hospital beds and the need to take this into consideration especially for patients who wish to remain at home and lived in old buildings in towns such as Blaenau Ffestiniog, where it was not possible to fit a special hospital bed into the houses and consequently this forced the elderly to go into a home or hospital.

(d) In response to the above observations, the Head of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department explained that the market position in terms of residential care homes was very vulnerable and this was not unique to Gwynedd. It was confirmed that a residential care home had recently closed, however, they had managed to re-locate the residents in close cooperation with the Health Board. He noted that the costs of wages had an impact on the viability of some of the homes, however, the fundamental problem was the recruitment of nurses. In terms of dual registration, it was explained that initial discussions and research were proceeding with the Health Board in order to consider the possibility of providing dual registration facilities. This will include legal counsel regarding what can be achieved. It was confirmed that it was not currently possible to give a speedy response as initial findings of the work were required in terms of legislation etc.

(dd) It was explained, in response to a further enquiry regarding the difference in payments to residential homes, that the costs of homes varied and were dependent on the conditions of the buildings, location and the type of care expertise / provision etc. Currently, it was noted that work was proceeding regarding fees to ensure a cost effective service bearing in mind the existing financial climate. An assurance was given that a further report would be provided to the next preparatory meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and officers would be invited to the meeting to outline the processes for setting residential care home fees together with the viability of private care homes in Gwynedd.

(e) It was explained, in response to an enquiry regarding a rural solution, that it may be necessary to use a traditional solution, namely, to make use of the provision available in the area if there was no space for additional care homes.

(f) In terms of differentiating between the number of older local people and people who are out of County in residential care homes, the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department confirmed that the Department was seeking the figures for Councillor Aled Evans. It was further noted, that the Department had a few cases where authorities over the border give funding. An argument was submitted to the Government outlining the problems that the movement of people into Gwynedd has without their supportive networks, however, unfortunately success thus far had been limited.

(ff) The Senior Housing Manager explained that the Council had received a grant for two schemes and an additional one in Porthmadog, however, there was no commitment beyond this. It would be necessary to consider different options such as an extra care

light scheme that was a model between sheltered housing care and extra care housing. There was no 24 hour care within this scheme. Such a model was implemented at Cysgod y Gogarth, Conwy.

Resolved: To request that the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department ensures that the following matters are included within the accommodation strategy for older people:

(i)

- **Acknowledgement that there was a stock of old housing in some areas and therefore it was impossible to provide hospital beds in the houses due to the specified size of a hospital bed and the need to consider different options in these areas.**
- **That additional financial recognition was required for some areas to address the growth in the number of people who have retired there and the cost of providing services for them.**

(ii) **Submit additional information to a preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee that will take place on 23 February 2016 to address the following matters**

- **Fees /costs and viability of private residential care homes**
- **Latest literature by Bangor University**
- **Extra Care Light provision**

5. GWYNEDD COUNCIL 2015-16 (QUARTER 2) PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW - CARE

A report was submitted by the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department in response to questions from Members following the receipt of the Overview Report on the Council's performance.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department responded as follows:

(a) that there were new requirements in relation to welfare duties, however, nothing specific had been received from the Government thus far. The duties would have to be undertaken within the existing resources and it would be necessary to conform to a wider restructuring within the Department. It was trusted that a Well-being Manager would be appointed next month.

(b) that approximately 20 students per annum attend the MA course in Social Work at Bangor. The Department had recently advertised for staff in the Meirionnydd area and the response was good.

(c) It was explained that it was proposed to raise public awareness of the Care Challenge and as a first step they would contact the Town Council and dependent on the response a wider work programme could be determined to meet with specific groups. It was noted that there was an appeal to visit the Penllyn area where five Community Councils were working together. It was assured that the awareness of Local Members would be raised in these visits in order that they are aware if there are any visits in their area.

(ch) an undertaking was given that the figures would be circulated to Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones regarding the number who are on the waiting lists of Social Workers.

(g) A great deal of research had been undertaken regarding career pathways, however, there was a great deal of work yet to be achieved. It was acknowledged that it

was difficult to recruit Social Workers and care workers in rural areas, and some of the external providers recruited care workers from overseas. However, an assurance was given that a great deal of effort had been made to contact Colleges of Further Education to raise the profile of opportunities but care was not an attractive career in terms of wages. More attention needed to be given to ensure that individuals identify the field soon and that there are opportunities to develop a further career. It was confirmed that a great deal had been done at a professional level in order to develop individuals in their career. It was recognised that the training structures of some external providers appeared stronger than others. It was noted that the Council should perhaps consider setting specific clauses in contracts in order to ensure an element of investment to develop career pathways.

(dd) Regarding the cuts, that the main elements in terms of impact had been presented and some would have an impact on the service such as on visits and timely assessments etc. and this meant difficult choices. However, having made an effort to get rid of waste, it was trusted that the impact would be less on individuals, but it would be slower in terms of providing services.

(h) In the context of recruitment problems and competition by external providers, it was noted that whilst accepting that it was a feat to retain individuals in post for a long period, it was easier for the Council to retain staff due to work conditions, pensions etc. A member stated that they should look at imaginative and innovative ways to retain staff such as a car lease scheme.

(i) In response to a comment made by a Member regarding a report by the third Sector, regarding the impact of wages/payments by local authorities on the viability of providers, it was assured that a copy would be sent to the Members of this Scrutiny Committee.

(j) In the same manner, it was suggested that a copy of the Carers Career Path should also be sent to them.

(ng) In terms of dual registration, it was added that the commissioning work was proceeding and it was anticipated that it would be completed around April and following this a further report could be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on the possible models. If there are examples of Committees that had undertaken the provision then these would be included within the investigation.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the report.

(b) To request that the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department submits a further report to this Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the commissioned work on dual registration.

(b) To request that the Members' Support Manager - Scrutiny sends the information outlined in (j) above to the Members of this Scrutiny Committee.

6. WORK PROGRAMME - PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT 2014/15 (CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES - CSSIW)

The Work Programme was presented that was formulated in response to the Performance Evaluation Report 2014/15 of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate.

Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the work programme and they highlighted the following points and these were responded to by the relevant officers:

- (a) it was felt that the matters in question had already been discussed and that there was no progress in term of the timetable

It was explained that the work programme was responding specifically to what was asked by the Inspectorate. A comment was received that it appeared that there had been some slowness over the last few months but this was for specific reasons and the fact that staff had to look at other ways of working.

A Member added that 2/3 of the project had been slow but this was dependent on decisions. It had to be borne in mind that many of the changes dealt with Department's culture, however, they would welcome a timetable that stated specific dates in the action plan.

- (b) Why were the Inspectorate currently visiting organisations/ individuals?

It was explained that the Inspectorate had chosen Gwynedd as one of the six authorities in Wales to receive an inspection of the learning disabilities service specifically, and they needed to discuss this with organisations / families and individuals.

- (b) What has happened to the residents of Plas y Bryn Home, Bontnewydd?

It was explained that the Council and the Health Board had organised to re-locate the residents of Plas y Bryn to specific wards in hospitals and to locations across North Wales dependent on the type of care they needed. In addition, some had moved to the home at Bryn Seiont Newydd. In further response to a comment regarding Bryn Seiont fees, that there had been negotiations between the Council, the Health Board and the home regarding a standard fee for individuals placed there.

- (ch) That the situation with the closure of the Bryn Llifon Home was a different process and concerned financial viability and staff recruitment difficulties.

(d) Regarding staff morale in the Department, the Head confirmed that he was of the opinion that it was low and it had to be remembered that the Department was going through significant changes in terms of culture, form and work processes with the re-structuring causing uncertainty for staff. It was trusted that once the changes were clear then they would be able to move forward and morale would improve. In terms of the timetable and bearing in mind that the changes were on a significant scale, it was anticipated that the situation would take approximately 12-15 months to settle down.

(dd) it was suggested that it would be advantageous to nominate two or three members from this Scrutiny Committee to assist with formulating the brief for the strategic plan regarding the arrangements to assist carers.

(e) The importance to keep an eye on, and give attention to supporting carers and to remember that some were schoolchildren, especially when individuals were discharged from hospital without an assessment.

(f) Concern was expressed by members, considering the proposed cuts, that the Department would not be able to cope with all the requirements of the Well-being Act and the Council would be placed in a situation of special measures.

In response, it was explained that there were efficiency savings that could be achieved within the Department and it was recognised that there was waste within some systems in every service. However, it was noted that the proposed cuts were in addition to the efficiency savings and of course this meant that they would have to reduce some services.

It was emphasised that they would try to ensure that any cut would have as little impact as possible on Gwynedd residents.

(ff) Reference was made to point 4.2 where it was noted that the two Cabinet Members were vital to ensure the success of the modernisation programmes and it was asked what would be the role of the Scrutiny Committee in this.

It was explained that all the Members were part of the programme of changes that were in the pipeline in terms of savings and cuts and the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act and that the Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Well-being made every effort to ensure that the work was being achieved. In addition, the importance of the role of those scrutinising was noted and this would be undertaken in more than one way be that by members of this Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Director and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to ensure that the Department was moving in the right direction.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the work programme subject to the receipt of a robust timetable to be implemented and presented to the preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2016.

(b) To nominate the following members to assist the relevant officers and the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being to draft a brief for the strategic plan in relation to assistance for carers:

**Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones
Councillor R H Wyn Williams**

7. CORPORATE PARENT PANEL

Resolved: To elect Councillor Siân Wyn Hughes to serve on the Corporate Parent Panel to succeed Councillor Elin Walker Jones, following her recent resignation from the Panel.

The meeting commenced at 10:00am and concluded at 12:00pm.

CHAIRMAN