
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26/05/16

Present:

Councillors: Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Beth Lawton, Eirwyn Williams, Hefin Williams and R H Wyn Williams.

Officers: Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

Also in attendance:

For Item 7 below:

Councillor W. Gareth Roberts, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health

For Item 8 below:

Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member for Education
Garem Jackson, Education Quality Improvement Officer

For Items 9 below:

Councillor W. Gareth Roberts, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health
Meilys Smith

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Beth Lawton as Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for 2016 – 2017

Councillor Beth Lawton thanked Councillor Peter Read for his work and for his interest in the field as former chair of this Scrutiny Committee.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Eirwyn Williams as Vice-chair of this Scrutiny Committee for 2016 – 2017

3. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Councillors Siân Wyn Hughes, Dewi Owen, Peter Read, Gareth A Roberts and Ann Williams. Neil Foden and David Healy (Teachers' Union Officers)

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones declared a personal interest in item 9 of the agenda, due to the nature of her work. The Councillor withdrew from the room during the discussion.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held 17 March 2016

7. UPDATE REPORT – ALLTWEN SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- a) A report on the investigation was presented, updating the Scrutiny Committee on the work achieved and the work planned. The Chair of the Investigation, Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones, noted that there needed to be further investigation into this field, as it was very confusing to interpret who, and how many, received the service. It was suggested that more time was needed to make further enquiries to resolve this, and to ask for feedback from service users. It was proposed that a day could be spent at Alltwen to seek input from some of the users.
- b) It was noted that only three members of the investigation had been present at the meeting held in May, and it was suggested that the meeting should have been postponed due to the number of attendees and the matters that had arisen at the Committee.

In response, it was noted that there was no quorum for a scrutiny investigation, and it had been decided that the meeting should proceed if three members attended. It was suggested that future dates should be set so that they were in the members' diaries.

- c) The observation on the need to consider the response of former patients and service users was accepted, but that careful consideration must be given due to confidentiality and data protection issues. It is suggested that front line officers who worked with service users could gather this information on a face to face basis, to avoid causing concern amongst users of being questioned for an investigation.

In response to the proposal to spend a day at the hospital to gather feedback, it was suggested that one person would be sufficient to do this.

- ch) During the discussion, the following observations were noted
- Examples of failures in obtaining equipment - the need for a solution. It was noted that the process of obtaining equipment was burdensome and that there was a need to keep the benefit local.
 - Important to include input from service users as part of the investigation, and that there was a system in place to ensure this.
 - National Health Service Staff proved a service over 24 hours a day, 7 days per week - it was noted that Gwynedd staff didn't provide hours over weekends - need to address this
 - The Health Board's slow progress in committing to some aspects
 - should be extended further - extend the scheme to other areas
 - A request for the investigation to note the age of the individuals questioned due to the unwillingness of some older people to complain
 - Has consideration been given to additional likely pressure on the service as a result of a decision to leave Europe?

- d) In response to the above observations, the Cabinet Member noted that he accepted the officers' comments. He noted that patients appreciated the new working methods, and that it was important to continue with the positive attitude.
- dd) It was accepted that there was conflict between establishing a new system and the old system, and that there were frustrations involved with its extension, but that a solution must be found before moving on. He agreed with the observation that there was a need to seek input from service users, but that this must be undertaken in a meaningful way.

In response to a question about the budget for the process, it was noted that funding for the Vanguard Pilot Scheme had been received solely for the officers.

RESOLVED

- **To approve an extension to the investigation until September 2016.**
- **Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones would spend a day at Alltwen shadowing officers and gathering information, before reporting back to the Investigation.**
- **An arrangement was in place for the service to share patients' comments with the investigation.**

8. WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- a) Submitted - a report by the Cabinet Member on progress made by the Education Department in response to the recommendations of the Welsh-Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation. Members were reminded that recommendations had been produced to improve the consistency and quality of Welsh language education provision within the County's catchment areas.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Education Department had made arrangements for an independent expert to undertake a study on the exact meaning of bilingual teaching and learning where applicable, and to define the linguistic nature of the County's secondary schools (Recommendations 1 and 2 of the investigation). It was explained that, although an expert had been appointed, that it had not been possible to commence the work due to personal circumstances. It was reported that the department had considered appointing another expert, but it had been decided to postpone the work until September 2016. It was noted that this situation was unfortunate, but that it had now been resolved.

A terms of reference for the study had been shared with the members for information.

- b) In presenting the action plan, the Education Quality Improvement Officer noted that the County's Schools' Language Policy needed to be updated, and that the consideration of the Secondary sector was a core part of the study.
- c) Disappointment was expressed that there was no response to all the recommendations in the progress report, and a request was made to the Education Quality Improvement Officer to report on / provide a brief overview of each recommendation.
- ch) The Education Quality Improvement Officer was thanked for the details. The Cabinet Member noted that any future recommendations would be included and responded to in the Department's Business Plan, and also the recommendations of the Annual Report - a request was made for the Scrutiny Committees to look at the Education Business Plan.

d) In response to the comments, the Chair noted that the investigation had proved valuable and that it was pleasing to see some action already on the recommendations.

dd) During the discussion, the following comments were noted:

- In the context of Ysgol Friars there was a need to ensure appropriate linguistic provision for the children.
- Any additional reports / documents should have been distributed beforehand to facilitate better scrutiny of the situation
- It was emphasised that it was a Scrutiny Investigation on Welsh-Medium Education, not Bilingual Education - and that there was a need to be proactive in order to keep the Welsh Language alive
- Need to look urgently at the organisation of schools in Bangor. Need to consider private schools in Bangor - to gain some control of the use of language here.
- Why do schools place themselves in categories - a need for consistency
- The use of language beyond school hours is difficult to control - need to measure that use of language in society and ensure that there is encouragement / training for volunteers and trainers
- Need to review the recommendations as 'smart' targets
- Concern that schools could be Anglicised, with children moving to nearby schools, resulting in additional pressure on those schools.
- Support required for non-Welsh speaking parents.

e) In response to the comment in relation to measuring the use of the language outside school hours, the Cabinet Member noted that by using the Language Charter, the children themselves reported on their social use of language. Head teachers and Governors were also encouraged to consider this element.

f) In response to an observation about Redrow funding in Bangor, it was reported that this was the responsibility of the Planning Department.

ff) In response to a comment about Ysgol Friars, it was noted that the Chair of the Governors, and the Local Member, Councillor Mair Rowlands, had held discussions with the Education Department and had provided input to the language Policy.

g) The report was welcomed and gratitude was expressed for the work that had been achieved thus far. The need to review the recommendations publicly and formally was highlighted. Disappointment was expressed that the additional documents had not been distributed beforehand. The request for the independent expert to discuss the initial observations / ideas of the study with members of the Scrutiny Investigation was accepted.

RESOLVED,

a) to accept the progress report, and aim to submit a further progress report responding to all the recommendations in 6-months' time (January 2017)

b) the expert undertaking the independent study to meet members of the investigation so that they can provide input to his work

9. TRANSPORT POLICY: ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

(Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones withdrew from the room and did not participate in the discussion)

- a) A report was presented by the Cabinet Member highlighting the need for Gwynedd Council to set a new transport policy and arrangements for the Adults, Health and Well-being Department in response to the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. It was highlighted that the Act placed a duty on the Council to promote the well-being of our citizens in order to promote and support independence.

Following changes in legislation and the financial climate, the Cabinet Member noted that there was a need to adopt a fair and sustainable transport policy. He highlighted that changes could affect service users, and therefore effective engagement with stakeholders, including users and their families, would be crucial to the process.

It was reported, as each individual was assessed, that transport was addressed as part of the care plan - and was part of the plan rather than an add-on. To address this, each individual would need to be assessed comprehensively.

The incentive behind the exercise was to respond to the act, and three possible options for consideration were highlighted.

- Decide not to change the arrangements. There would be financial and cultural implications of not changing our practice in this field.
- Adopt the new policy and revisit care packages specifically from the perspective of the new transport policy.
- Adopt the new policy in relation to new packages, reassessments and annual reviews of packages as opposed to conducting a specific review of transport matters.

It was suggested that option 1 was unrealistic and unsustainable in the context of the Council's financial situation.

- b) In response to a question on why the total cost of Mental Health was low for the 2016/17 budget (£550.00), it was noted that nobody with mental health conditions currently received a service and therefore it was reported that it was solely a 'suggestion'.

In response to an observation that it was a scheme to save money and not to promote independence, the Cabinet Member accepted that there would be a saving of approximately £38k involved with the process, but it was outlined that the intention was to include transport as part of the care package. It was reported that there was scope here to work with integrated transport, e.g. better use of the residential homes' fleet to move people within the County, to promote well-being and support independence.

- c) During the discussion, the following observations were noted:

- Need to promote independence for older people, ensuring that they had freedom to leave the house.
- Need to ensure that the service was for the whole of Gwynedd and not only the main areas.
- Need to better coordinate with the hospital taxi service.
- In favour of working more effectively - internal arrangements appeared to be untidy currently and therefore there was a need to restructure to ensure better arrangements and flexible transport arrangements.
- There was a need to consider transport resources in schools.

- Need to ensure that the assessment is correct and that the service is provided to those with the greatest need.
- What is the difference between 'assessment' and 'real need'?? There must be an understanding of the individual's actual need, by identifying opportunities to meet that need rather than giving them the impersonal 'day care' label.
- A suggestion that a family member or carer should be with the individual during the assessment in order to gain an independent opinion.
- In the context of the appeal process - who would be on the panel? Need to consider that people were vulnerable and that there was no need to set stringent rules. A suggestion that the appeals process should be accessible and flexible.
- The principles of the scheme were welcomed, although concern was expressed regarding its practicality. Accessibility to services must be ensured, alongside encouragement and offering users the opportunity to develop skills to nurture confidence to use public transport.
- Distance, the ability to travel themselves and the situation of other counties set a dangerous precedent.

- ch) In response to a question regarding distance setting a precedent, it was noted that distance itself did not lead to a 'need for transport', but it was noted that opportunities to meet the needs of all individuals must be identified.

It was not possible to provide an answer to who would be on the panel for the appeals process. Assurance was given that a response would be sent to the enquirer.

- d) In response to a question regarding what other counties had adopted similar arrangements, it was noted that Flintshire had succeeded in maintaining such a system. It was noted that officers from Flintshire had collaborated well with Gwynedd Council officers and had shared good practice.

In response to the comment, a request was made for the service to consider a county with a profile more similar to Gwynedd.

- dd) In response to a question regarding the assessments, it was noted that the assessments would be conducted on a more positive basis. It was reiterated that the same professional workers would be undertaking the assessments, and that the assessments would be comprehensive. The assessment would lead to outcomes that required solutions.

The Cabinet Member emphasised that this was a scheme to meet individuals' needs, that it was a creative, exciting and challenging scheme for the service, that would provide benefits to all individuals. The service was duty-bound to offer the best service to citizens, and all efforts would be made to deliver this - there would have to be rationalisation, but nobody would be disregarded.

It was proposed and seconded to support option 3.

RESOLVED

To make the following recommendations to the Cabinet:

- **To implement Option 3, which corresponds with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014, by building on the individual's strengths and looking at building on community strengths.**
- **To ensure appropriate use and coordinate internal transport arrangements.**
- **To note more details in the Report to the Cabinet about the appeals process.**

- **To carefully consider the impact on individuals in relation to the cost and whether the impact could be mitigated.**
- **To request that Flintshire highlights the lessons learned/obstacles faced, so that they can be included in the report to the Cabinet.**
- **To consider arrangements in other counties that have a similar profile to Gwynedd.**
- **To give equal consideration to every part of rural and urban Gwynedd in terms of facilitating and coordinating transport arrangements.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN.