

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Joint Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill, (Chairman)
County Councillor John Crook, (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Fay Bromfield, Rachel Buckler, John Crook, Christopher Edwards, Catherine Fookes, Simon Howarth, Meirion Howells, Penny Jones, Alistair Neill, Maureen Powell, Jackie Strong, Peter Strong, Ann Webb, Laura Wright and Steven Garratt (substituting for Sue Riley)

Officers in Attendance

Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
Kelly Turner, Child Protection Co-Ordinator
Claire Robins, Service Manager - Transformation

APOLOGIES: County Councillor Sue Riley substituted by Steven Garratt

Note: the following minutes focus on the challenge from Members – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting is at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIPzZcsupnk&list=PLLMqn4nAaFJDsC93C-EKJZrFkDEQBdiXK&index=12

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Neill was nominated by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Webb. Councillor Crook was nominated by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Peter Strong.

The vote was tied at 7-7. Councillor Crook proposed that Councillor Neill chair the meeting, which he accepted.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Crook was nominated by Councillor Peter Strong, seconded by Councillor Buckler.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Public Open Forum

None.

5. Safeguarding Performance report

Cabinet Member Ian Chandler and Jane Rodgers introduced the report. Jane Rodgers answered the members' questions with Diane Corrister and Kelly Turner.

Key Questions from members:

- What is the significance of the numbers relating to Practitioner concerns on p15? The raw number doesn't give a sense of a weighting between concerns – does that impede our ability to judge things year to year?
- There are some typos and errors that could be corrected – **ACTION (Councillor Bond to send to officers)**
- Are there any ideas as to why more males are coming through for child exploitation?
- Could we have an explanation of what 'VOLT' is?
- What are the plans and blockers for improving the 50% homelessness prevention success rate?
- How many young people are in the temporary accommodation shared home?
- What is the tendering for, regarding the Hub evaluation (p28)?
- How will the Thinqi scores be made to improve from 4 to 5 once it's implemented?
- Why have the RAG ratings stayed at green and not gone up to Level 6?
- Is Thinqi training particularly useful for interim and agency staff to quickly assess what their capabilities are?
- How closely do you work with Police regarding child exploitation?
- It would be useful for both committees to have a session with the officers and Police to go into further detail, and get a fuller understanding – **ACTION (officers to take forward and look at dates)**
- What is the explanation of the drop from 43 down to 20 of child exploitation cases?
- Why has the number of SPACE panel referrals gone down but now seems to be rising again?
- Is there any way to measure the impact of the training on VAWDASV?
- Can you further explain the sentence about 'consistent attendees at MARAC' on p19?
- P33, the chart seems to be flipped relative to the data – this perhaps needs to be altered? – **ACTION (officers will check)**
- P14, regarding safeguarding training, is feedback given to participants? – **ACTION (officers will check)**
- Regarding p33, do we get a lot of asylum-seeking children in this county?
- What is the proportion of young people who are homeless?
- Can we see more of the children's voices in next year's report, particularly as it would give greater objectivity to our performance?
- For greater objectivity, would there be a benefit from a team from another authority looking over our services, and us doing likewise?
- Could next year's report incorporate an examination of the link between young adults leaving the care system and older age homelessness?

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to officers. The report was moved.

6. Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Annual Report

Jane Rodgers introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Diane Corrister, Claire Robins and Cabinet Member Ian Chandler.

Key Questions from members:

- What can be done to mitigate the vacancies? Are they mostly caused by stress?
- What factors are causing demand for new adults services?
- Is “uncertainty owing to the ‘eliminating profit’ agenda” tied to the lack of suitable placements for children?
- What do you mean by becoming “more competitive as ‘for profit’ providers”?
- Can you elaborate on the responding to government policy drive?
- What pressures do the staff see as particularly difficult in achieving the aim of keeping children at home and in their communities?
- What is your positive learning culture and practice?
- Why do you see recruitment as being so difficult?
- How much are the domestic abuse factors rising and do we have a programme of cooperation with schools and teachers for educating the next generation? Can we help to prevent the next cycle of this?
- What are we doing to increase the percentage of children with in-house foster carers, from 42%?
- What are we doing to achieve more in-house carers? Do we need a big recruitment drive in Monmouth, as the report says none re situated there?
- 73% of care leavers are in employment – what are we doing to support the remaining 27%?
- Most of the unmet care hours are in the community, rather than those coming out of hospital – can we be reassured that we are getting the balance right between getting people back home and some needing to be in hospital?
- What is the current situation regarding physios, occupational therapists, etc.? Are we able to recruit and retain staff?
- What is the current state of the Care And Repair budget? – **ACTION** (officers will provide further information)
- What are the waiting times for the Strong Families team and counselling in schools, and what can be done about it?
- The inspection report suggested documentation should be reviewed – will the new system coming in be an answer to that?
- Management oversight, working to principles of the Care Act 2014 – is there an action relating directly to that?
- Foster carers, utilising local businesses to help with recruitment – have there been enquiries about that? There’s more that we can do to drive recruitment ourselves – utilising community councils, websites, etc.
- How advantageous is GWICES (Gwent Wide Integrated Community Equipment Service)? Does the Adult Safeguarding team have access to it?
- Is providing a fair living wage for foster carers something that has been or is being considered?

- The infographics are very helpful – it would be useful to have the information in a dashboard format at the start of the document
- It would be useful to reference the remaining percentages when one is given e.g. 73% – what about the remaining 27%?
- P39, looking ahead to the number of over-65s in the county: in ten years the UK population over 65 will be greater than those under 15, leading to questions about finance and stability. Microcarers and the engagement of volunteers sounds like a very important development in the sustainability of services – it will be very interesting to see how this progresses
- P47, the number of contacts made in a week and p53, weekly unmet care needs having declined, give an insight to the public of what's so essential
- How are we doing relative to other authorities – would it be useful to get objectivity by looking at this?

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to officers. The recommendations were moved.

7. Next Meetings:

Performance & Overview committee next meets on 22nd November. People committee will next meet on 23rd January, with the 19th December meeting having been cancelled.

The meeting ended at **12.07 pm**