

# Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

**Meeting of Joint Select Committee held  
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday,  
5th September, 2019 at 10.00 am**

## **Councillors Present**

County Councillor Tudor Thomas (Chairman)  
County Councillor Frances Taylor (Vice  
Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Brown, R. Edwards,  
M.Groucutt, R. Harris, D. Jones, M.Lane,  
T.Thomas, S. Woodhouse and P. Clarke

## **Officers in Attendance**

Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young  
People  
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and  
Governance  
Julie Boothroyd, Chief Officer Social Care,  
Safeguarding and Health  
Richard Jones, Performance Manager  
Eve Parkinson, Head of Adult Services  
Jane Rodgers, Head of Children's Services  
Sophie Cook, Business Support

**APOLOGIES:** County Councillors A.Davies, M. Powell and M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

### **1. Election of Chair**

Nominations for chair were sought. Cllr Tudor Thomas was the sole nominee and was duly elected to the position of chair.

### **2. Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Nominations for vice-chair were sought. Cllr Frances Taylor was the sole nominee and was duly elected to the position of chair.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

### **4. Public Open Forum**

No members of the public addressed the Committee as part of the public open forum.

### **5. Corporate Plan: To hold Cabinet Members to account on performance and alignment of service delivery to the Corporate Plan**

#### **3. Corporate Plan Goals and National Performance Measures**

- The report was introduced by the Performance Manager. It was explained that the report covers the 22 things that Council has committed to delivering by 2022 as part of its five well-being objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- The report covers progress against the objectives of greatest relevance to the Adult and Children and Young People Select Committees and shows how they contribute to the national goals set out under the Well-Being of Future Generations Act. There are assessments against the overall objectives and the individual steps in the report.

## Members Challenge

- There was challenge about process for determining the level of assessment. It was explained that these judgements were arrived at using the council's self-evaluation framework. Each action of assessed and then the assessment of individual actions was aggregated to give an overall assessment which acts as a higher level summary judgement.
- The assessed level of performance of 'adequate' assigned to the Best Possible Start in Life goal was challenged. Members heard that while Foundation Phase and Key Stage 4, were not where we had wanted to be in 2018, the overall performance at foundation phase remained high while improvement has been made in levels 2 and 3 at expected level and expected level +1. Members were reminded that a report on Mounton House would be coming back to the committee later in September. Members also heard that there had not been a reduction in LEA funding for teaching assistants and will remain so where children present with a clear assessed level of need.
- Members asked whether there were problems in links between education and health in the area of young peoples' mental health. Member heard about the 'Iceberg Model' of provision for early assessment and intervention which has been funded from the transformation fund.
- Members sought further detail about why performance in 2018 was not at the expected level and were reminded that this data has been scrutinised over the course of the past twelve months in a number of arenas. Members also heard from the Cabinet Member who explained some of the activity that had been delivered to support vulnerable learners for targeted support in year 11.
- A challenge was raised about whether the corporate plan could be amended to support Mounton House School. The Cabinet member responded that Cabinet will ensure that pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure they are educated in the most appropriate environment.
- Members challenged the assessment of objective on Lifelong Well-being as 'good', for example there are fewer young people participating in sporting activity. Members heard from the Cabinet member that we have a responsibility to make opportunities available, for example through our leisure centres which have been maintained, and in some cases upgraded and also run events such as the Monmouthshire Games.
- Members challenged the decision to keep tourism, leisure and culture services in house following the amount of resource used to prepare the business case. Members heard from the Cabinet Member that the authority should not be afraid to innovate and try different things but sometimes you pursue options, weight them up and decide not to take a certain path. The example of Monmouth Leisure Centre was cited as an example of how services can thrive in-house.
- Members raised a question about whether cabinet members were as challenging on officers as they could be. The Cabinet for Social Care and Safeguarding responded that challenge does take place and that more feedback from selects would be welcomed and reminded committee that Cabinet is also held to account in full council. The Cabinet member for Children and Young People also made reference to regular meetings with the Education Achievement Service and Schools to challenge performance and ensure focus on learner outcomes.
- There was challenge about the selection of measures chosen to evidence progress. Members heard that there were a broad range of measures drawn from national frameworks prescribed by Welsh Government and service business plans and included based on their relevance to the corporate plan.

## Outcomes

- That the committee express a concern to Cabinet members that a judgement of 'good' can sometimes been applied too soon when we are still in the process of change and before improvements have become evident.
- That scrutiny chairs have an opportunity to sit with the performance team to ensure an understanding of how the evaluation scores is applied and how the evidence leads to judgements using the self-evaluation framework
- The Committee wish to see evidence, where it is available, that additional money put in to support vulnerable learners is having the desired effect.

**6. Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health, Annual Report: Scrutiny of the Annual Report (Annual Report can be accessed by clicking "Go to this Sway" in the cover report).**

- This is a new approach to the annual report. The headings used are standard across Wales, however the Chief Officer explained that she used Microsoft Sway to produce a more interactive document while contained a broad range of evidence supplied by all sections of the workforce to give evidence to illustrate how the six quality standards outlined in the report are met. These are supplementary to the core narrative produced by the Chief Officer.
- The Chief Officer talked through the chapter headings and highlighted a number of specific sections.

Members Challenge

- There was challenge around how members will know what the differences are when they look back on progress this time next year and whether this format made scrutiny more difficult. Members heard that the report contains a mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Conventional measures are still part of the report and can be found via a link. It was also explained that the embedded slide decks and short films can be shared easily with the community and service users. Sway also has tools which make the content more accessible
- The committee wanted a more detailed explanation about the work taking place to turn around the current rising numbers in childrens' services. It was explained that social workers can refer to a specialist team to get a focused intervention which should turnaround a case. This is an intensively resourced team that work with small numbers of people and works to keep children within a family.
- Members sought an explanation about the links between poverty and those entering the care system. It was explained that there is a correlation between the data, however while poverty can place incredible pressure on families there is not a proved causal link. Some of these issues are also inter-generational.
- There was a challenge whether the broad priorities made it harder to see the detail of what was being delivered and for members to hold officers to account, for example fostering. It was explained that there is a huge amount of detail and this has been lifted into broad themes but the detail beneath these is covered within the report with even more details available in teams service plans
- Members challenged the level of delayed transfers of care and the difficulties of providing services in some areas and whether this resulted in a postcode lottery. It was explained that the situation is more problematic that in previous years. There are links to difficulties with the independent market for domiciliary care where it is more difficult to secure provision. These areas have been targeted with specific projects, for example 'Turning the World Upside Down'.
- Members challenged whether the fee levels paid by local authorities to private care providers created a risk that care providers were not sustainable; sought assurance that

providers are economically sound and the impact on people if they go out of business. Members heard that officers meet with providers in each locality on a regular basis to explore recruitment, retention and viability. The ongoing work as part of the Turning the World Upside Down project which will mean commissioning in a placed based way which makes the sector more sustainable and recognises the different costs in different parts of the county.

#### Outcomes

- Members requested that the measures and targets be included as an appendix to make them more accessible with clear links to the standards when this is taken to council.
- Members identified that training may need to be provided on Sway if this is to be used more in future
- Members asked whether it was possible to gather further data on the socio-economic background of children going into care to better understand the links between care and poverty
- The current situation with delayed transfers of care was noted and full report on domiciliary care will be brought to the next full meeting of Adult Select Committee
- The chair will write to the Cabinet Member ask for any further reflections

**The meeting ended at 4.25 pm**