

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Adults Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Tuesday 16th June 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Farley (Chair)

County Councillors: R. Harris, P. Jones, P. Watts and A. Wintle

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor V. Smith

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Mrs. D. Hudson
Mr. D. Hill

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. J. Boothroyd	-	Head of Adult Services
Mr. I. Bakewell	-	Housing and Communities Manager
Mr. M. Howcroft	-	Assistant Head of Finance
Mr. T. Stokes	-	Finance Manager
Mr. M. Gatehouse	-	Policy and Performance Manager
Ms. S. Sexton	-	People Development Lead
Ms. H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mrs. N. Perry	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors R. Edwards and R. Chapman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. PERFORMANCE MONITORING: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014-2017 AND OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

Context:

Members scrutinised a performance report from the Policy and Performance Manager outlining the end of year data for the Improvement Objective and Outcome Agreement which were under the remit of the Adults Select Committee, being:

- Improvement Objective 2 – We will work to help people live on their own lives by building flexible and responsive services. Our focus will be on safeguarding

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people, further developing our approach to integrated services and implementing community coordination in the pilot areas

- Outcome Agreement Theme 2 – Ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives.

We were informed that the Outcome Agreement was one of 5 themes, and had achieved a high score. There would be more detail provided at an Adults Select meeting to be held on Tuesday 30th June 2015.

Key Issues:

Improvement Objectives were set annually by the Council to deliver on priorities. Despite objectives being focused on the long term, the specific activities that support them were particularly focused on the year ahead.

The Outcome Agreement is an agreement with the Welsh Government for a three year period, where the Council needs to deliver on performance activity and associated targets that contributed to the Wales Programme for Government. The current agreement covers the period from 2013 to 2016. The Council would be awarded funding each year from the Welsh Government based on the performance achieved.

The score and summary for the main points for consideration on performance in 2014/15 showed that the Improvement Objective 2 had been scored at Level 4 – Good.

The score and summary of the main points for consideration on performance in 2014/15 showed that the Outcome Agreement Theme 2 had been scored as Fully Successful – 2 points.

Member scrutiny:

Members required clarification on item 3.7.4 of the report, where it stated that all staff across were using an Integrated Assessment. We were advised that ‘across’ referred to the whole integrated service.

Members queried if other Authorities were visiting Monmouthshire County Council to observe the areas of good practice. The Head of Adults Services informed the Committee that they had been invited to speak at key events across Wales and England. People were enthused and we had received visitors from Anglesey, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Denbighshire to name a few. Other Local Authorities took ideas and looked how best to transport into their service.

Members requested that the format of the report be altered to include headings to tables each continuing page. **(ACTION – MG)**

A concern was raised that the focus of the report seemed to shift to the safeguarding of children, and that further information on the safeguarding of older people would be

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expected to be included. The Policy and Performance Manager explained that the new objectives set on 23rd April 2015 were more reflective on adults safeguarding. The next update would be far broader in narrative.

Members raised concerns that the amount of reporting and convictions of people abusing older people seemed to be far lower than expected. The Head of Adult Services explained that there would be a special meeting scheduled for July 2015 to discuss adult protection and safeguarding. We heard that statistics showed that 36% of all abuse was from a regulated setting.

Members questioned if the number of older people receiving traditional long-term community based packages of social care was a figure we were aiming to reduce. We were informed that the traditional packages of care did not include the interaction with Community Coordinators. There was growing recognition that to be independent should mean to be independent in the community, with people around you. Officers were trying to reduce the figure, but an added pressure was the rising number of older population.

Members questioned why there were no targets set for the number of adult clients who were supported in the community during the year. It was explained that the Authority is required to report the data but it no longer fitted into the Monmouthshire mind-set or way of working. The Head of Adult Services explained that a new framework agreement would be set from April 2016.

It was noted that the number of people who were happy with the service delivered was not the same as the number of people who felt that the service met their needs. It was explained that a number of varied questions had to be asked.

Recommendations:

The Committee were required to consider the following recommendations:

- To scrutinise the performance achieved and the impact made to assess progress and performance against the objectives.
- To identify and explore and areas of underperformance or concerns, and to seek assurance from those responsible for future activity where they conclude that performance needs to improve
- To confirm the evaluation scores based on the evidence provided.
- To scrutinise the targets and any revisions for the key Performance Indicators that fall within the remit of Adults Select Committee.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked the officers for the thorough and helpful report, and appreciated the early sighting of what would be reported in further detail at the Special Meeting.

The report had provided the Committee with an understanding of the process of change.

4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT: CHANGE OF HOMELESSNESS POLICY

Context:

Members received a report presented by the Housing and Communities Manager, to seek approval to continue to apply the test of intentionality to all household groups presenting as homeless to the Council, in line with the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Key Issues:

The Council is required by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to provide a formal public statement on which household groups the Council would continue to assess as being intentionally homeless. The assessment would include where an individual household contributed to their homelessness through either a deliberate act or lack of action on the part of the household which subsequently resulted in their accommodation being lost for no good reason.

The number of households found to be intentionally homeless each year was relatively low as a proportion to homeless determinations.

Member Scrutiny:

Members noted that the intentionality test was reviewed by Monmouthshire County Council alone, on a bi-annual basis.

Members heard that the determinations for 2014/15 had been on 249 applications, of which 16 were intentional.

Members noted the impressive list of key partners who been consulted as part of the proposal, and queried how many had responded. The Housing and Communities Manager explained that 3 responses had been received:

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- Children's Services, Monmouthshire County Council had asked about not applying the test of intentionality to care leavers. In such cases officers would work with Children's Services to avoid intentional homelessness.
- Seren (Bond Scheme) had responded and supported the application.
- Housing Services, Torfaen County Borough Council responded and had encouraged the consistent approach.

Members felt that the lack of responses from partners was disappointing but were reassured to hear that officers worked closely with them as support agencies.

Recommendations:

The report requested that the Committee agree to continue to apply the test of intentionality to all household groups presenting as homeless to the Council.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chairman thanked the officer for the report, and noted that a Special Meeting was scheduled for 8th July 2015 to discuss homeless issues.

The Committee fully endorsed the proposal and agreed that the Chair would convey its conclusion to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

5. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: PROPOSAL TO ENTER INTO COLLABORATION ON TRAINING FOR SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

Context:

Members received a report in order to consider the rationale of the Social Care and Health Workforce Development Team entering into a collaborative arrangement to deliver the service jointly with Torfaen and Newport Councils.

Key Issues:

Under the proposal, the Workforce Development Team would work collaboratively with equivalent teams in Newport and Torfaen Councils. This would be the first step towards a full merger with the other Gwent authorities in April 2017. The five Directors of Social Services in Gwent were aware of, and supportive of, the proposal.

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If approved there would be a requirement for a shared locality for management and administrative functions, which should not incur any additional costs for the Authority.

It was suggested that Torfaen would be the lead authority in the collaboration.

Member Scrutiny:

The Chairman clarified that the Committee were required to consider the appropriateness of the proposal and to confirm that we were, in principal, content for negotiations to continue.

Members requested explanation of the acronyms in the report. We heard that VER indicated Voluntary Early Retirement.

Members questioned how the collaboration would be scrutinised, as it was felt that ongoing scrutiny would be beneficial. We were informed that no definite arrangements were in place but it was thought that the Authority would scrutinise individually rather than jointly.

The Head of Adult Services explained that the Authority had developed a good profile around training, and it was important not to lose the relationships between teams. It was important for Monmouthshire to influence the shape of the model, using current collaborative models as examples of good practice.

The Chairman acknowledged that the arrangements should be built in to the Committee's scrutiny arrangements. There were concerns on how to manage the cultural side, which may be at risk in the changing environment. It was expressed that the Committee would provide support to officers going forward, in keeping a tight focus on our scrutiny process.

A Member raised a concern that Monmouthshire County Council would not want to lose their leading position in social care. The People Development Lead agreed that other Authorities recognised that Monmouthshire County Council had a different approach, and were beginning to adopt some methods. It was noted that it would be ideal to create a nerve centre where management and administrative work take place.

Members raised a query regarding the statistic of 36% of abuse being from a regulated setting and questioned whether the problem would be addressed through the training department. We were informed that training regarding the matter was carried out on a monthly basis. Discussions were being held with Commissioning to address the issue.

Recommendations:

The report requested that Members arrive at a view on the appropriateness of future joint delivery of the service, and to give an 'in principle' decision on whether officers should proceed with negotiations with neighbouring authorities.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chairman thanked the officer for the report and noted that the Committee agreed the appropriateness of the future delivery of the service, with some safeguards needed.

The Committee agreed, in principle, for officers to continue with negotiations with neighbouring authorities.

The Chairman agreed to inform the Cabinet Member of the decision.

6. BUDGET MONITORING: REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORTS

Context:

Members received a report from the Assistant Head of Finance in order to receive information on the outturn position of the Authority for the 2014/15 financial year. The position was regarded as draft prior to the external audit of the Statement of Accounts. The report provided summary information about the council's reserve position as a consequence of year end movements

The report had been to Cabinet and Members were asked to consider the recommendations proposed to Cabinet, as outlined in the report.

Members heard that the position concerning revenue monitoring outturn had resulted in a £31,000 surplus which was considered to be an exceptional result given that we were expected to draw upon reserves up to £296,000.

We heard that Community Education was an £18,000 adverse situation, due to £26,000 of redundancy costs which had been absorbed, and also to a reduction in funding of the NOVUS project.

Members Scrutiny:

Members questioned the position surrounding Monnow Vale. We were informed by the Finance Manager that officers were looking at an imminent innovative approach in line with the GWICES budget.

In response to a query regarding Community Meals we heard that in respect of a £30,000 mandate saving, £8000 had been attributed leaving a shortfall of £22,000.

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We heard that the majority of our clientele are in the 85+ bracket and feedback tells this service is invaluable to them and ensures that they are able to live healthier and more independent lives as a direct result of receiving the service. The service is cost neutral, so unlike some other authorities, we do not make an income from it but neither do we subsidise it, so whilst it makes a huge contribution to older people's health and well-being and hence meets all our improvement objectives in terms of safeguarding the vulnerable, it does not pose a significant financial implication to the Council. The Adults Select Committee have reviewed community meals as part of their work programme and support the current financial position and the continuation of this vital service.

Recommendations:

Members were asked to consider the report as part of their responsibility to:

- Assess whether effective budget monitoring was taking place.
- Monitor the extent to which budgets were spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework.
- Challenge the reasonableness of projected over or under spends.
- Monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chairman thanked the officers for the report and noted the considerable achievements described in the report.

The Committee welcomed the suggestions of ways to rebalance, and noted that there were many examples of good service.

The Chairman expressed that the Committee appreciated the ongoing effort made by the teams, under difficult circumstances

7. WORK PROGRAMMING

The Scrutiny Manager welcomed the Head of Adult Services to highlight items for scrutiny for the forthcoming year. We were informed of the following suggestions:

- The Raglan Project and the roll out of the Raglan Project – October 2015
- 'Turning the World Upside Down' – Early Autumn 2015

- Social Care and Well Being Act (two strands to highlight) – Early 2016

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- i. Adult Safeguarding and implications surrounding regulations.
- ii. Prisons and implications of them in our county.

The Chairman suggested that a workshop style for Turning the World Upside Down may be beneficial.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that a review on Mardy Park had been agreed. Members suggested that it would be useful for the meeting to be held at Mardy Park.

The Chairman informed Members that a meeting was scheduled with Bobby Bolt and Veronica Snow from ABUHB, which would be reported back to Committee in due course.

We heard that the following meetings were scheduled:

- Tuesday 30th June 2015 – Partnership scrutiny.
- Wednesday 8th July 2015 – Housing themed meeting. Joint meeting for Adults and Strong Communities Select.

The meeting ended at 4:37 pm.