

Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee
(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

21 September 2023

Chairperson: Councillor C.Galsworthy

Vice Chairperson: Councillor H.C.Clarke

Councillors: O.S.Davies, J.Jones, A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig, P.D.Richards, M.Spooner, S.Rahaman, A.R.Aubrey and H.Davies

Officers In Attendance R.Davies, C.Howard, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, K.Warren, E.Wellington, S.Waite, C.Jones, E.O'Brien, C.Griffiths, D.Harding, R.Jones, N.Jones, A.O'Donnell, L.Potterton, M.Potts, M.Selby, H.Short, M.Weaver, A.Metcalf, D.Jones, J.Jenkins, L. Cooper-Smith, L.Jones, M.Edwards, S.Hockin, S.Bradshaw, S.Coffey, A.Evans and P.Chivers

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors S.Harris and A.Llewelyn

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising agenda items 7, 8, 10, 13, 14 and 15 from the Cabinet Board agenda.

Members requested a brief overview on agenda item 9.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr P Richards, Item 14 (Cabinet Board) – Personal, Board Member of Care & Repair

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Annual Report**

Members agreed that the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee note and endorse the annual Report 2022/2023 attached at Appendix 1 and commend to Council.

5. **Housing and Communities - Mid-Year Progress Report**

The Head of Housing and Communities gave an overview of the reports contained in the agenda pack which provided responses to questions raised by members at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting. Appendix 1 provided an overview of work and progress and appendix 2 set out key data sets in relation to the demographic make-up of people presenting to housing options and temporary accommodation.

Following the production of the report, positive feedback has been received from the Welsh Government in relation to the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme bid. An official response has not yet been received but, if successful, an additional £2 million pounds in capital funding would be available. This would enable registered social landlords to purchase properties in order to increase the amount of social housing available to the homeless. It is hoped that an additional 50 houses would be secured through the Capital Grant Programme.

Significant work has been carried out with homeless families with children. A working group is being set up to work with registered social landlords' to target supporting families with children with the aim of moving families with children out of temporary accommodation. Currently there are 8 families with a total of 11 children in temporary B&B accommodation, this figure has decreased from 30 families.

Officers advised Members that the Community Safety Team have secured funding to continue the Young Person's hangout project for the rest of the financial year.

The Chair thanked the officer for an excellent report and for the recent improvements in the service.

The committee noted the report.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (Pages 11 - 88)

The Head of Housing and Communities gave an overview of the report attached to the Cabinet Agenda papers.

Members queried the 100 % favourable responses mentioned on page 50 of the report and enquired how many consultation responses were received. Officers confirmed that survivors from local services were consulted and invited to give feedback; 6 local survivors provided a response. Following the approval of the draft strategy, a two week period of public consultation was held in early May resulting in a further 18 responses from members of the public. Members requested that in future, this type of data be included in the committee report.

Members questioned whether the Neath Port Talbot and Welsh Government strategies were the same and if not what were the differences between the documents? Officers confirmed that the joint local strategy was prepared by the local authority and the health board and whilst it references the Welsh Government national strategy the objectives were similar but not identical. The joint strategy included a seventh objective on criminal justice, this was in recognition of information from local survivors that partners felt would be remiss not to include.

Members asked what further partnership work could be undertaken to identify changes needed to support victims during the evidence gathering process. It was noted that this type of cultural change takes time to implement. Officers recognised that there is much work needed around this objective. Some issues are broader than what can be carried out locally as they relate to national issues. Officers

advised members that within the Community Safety Team there are 4 Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, co-located within the police station, who work closely with police colleagues at all levels. Local specialist providers, Thrive Women's Aid, have received funding for a 5 year project called Rapid, more information will be shared in due course. Officers from Thrive will be based in the police station and they will accompany police colleagues to any domestic abuse related call, staff will act as an initial support mechanism, helping statements to be taken in the correct way. The local authority training programme includes training on responding to disclosures of domestic abuse and has been rolled out to all local authority staff; health and police colleagues are subject to the same training to promote a consistent approach. Due to the good will of the training officer this training has also been opened up to local magistrates with, to date, 29 local magistrates receiving domestic abuse training. It is believed that Neath Port Talbot is the only local authority to provide training to Magistrates. Within the area, there is a specialist domestic violence court, the Community Safety Team are looking at setting up a steering group to ensure work in this area is progressing effectively. Officers re-iterated, suggestions were welcomed from councillors and constituents in relation to improving domestic abuse services.

Members questioned how residents who were experiencing domestic abuse could contact the council for help, if they were not engaged with any particular service. Officers confirmed there were varied ways to access services but acknowledged there is a significant long standing issue with under reporting. The Communications and Engagement group has been set up specifically around VAWDASV (Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) and assists people to recognise when they are experiencing any form of domestic abuse and signposts to support services. Officers promote a number of different contact methods as it is recognised, residents may not wish to contact the police but may prefer to speak to friends/family members/Local Area Co-ordinators or health professionals. There are a wealth of services and disclosure options available to people with three local specialist providers funded by the Supporting People Grants. Thrive Women's Aid primarily covers Port Talbot, Calon DVS covers Neath and Pontardawe and Stori (Previously Hafan Cymru) covers the whole borough. There is an ongoing piece of work to help people recognise signs of domestic abuse. Officers commented that within the local authority there are a number of areas where staff may be the first point of contact and it was important to promote the work of the Community Safety Team, which strengthened and evidences the need for the strategy.

The Chair commented that organisational name changes can be confusing when signposting to organisations. The Head of Housing and Communities offered to devise a resource pack for Councillors which would list current providers and services offered. Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

Commissioning of Care And Support Services For Three Supported Living Schemes (Pages 89 - 118)

The officer gave an overview of the report.

Members questioned how the supported living schemes locations were selected and commented that although schemes in the Rhos community work well there is a reliance on public transport and goodwill of residents. Officers responded that the property market is limited at present and only one property has been identified. When shortlisting a property, consideration is given to ease of access to central locations. If properties are not centrally located then transport links are assessed. It was noted that green spaces can be therapeutic for individuals with a mental health diagnosis. Schemes are assessed on a case by case basis by multiple staff who assess individual needs.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

Delegation under Local Government Legislation to Briton Ferry Town Council regarding the provision of a day service (Pages 119 - 132)

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services gave an overview of the report.

The recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

Children & Young People, Adult Services and Housing & Community Safety - 1st Quarter (April 2023- June 2023) Performance Report (Pages 133 - 196)

The Director of Social Services, Health and Housing outlined the report and advised members that the information was presented in a new corporate format. Whilst the format could not be changed the information could be presented in an alternative way to make the information clearer, if members required.

Members agreed that there was no requirement to present in an alternative format at present.

Members referred to page 140 of the report and questioned whether referrals outside of the 42 day timeframe were dealt with in date order or were they assessed for urgency? Officers confirmed that all information received through the front door is assessed and a decision is made within 24 hours of receipt. There are no concerns about any delay in the process and there is rigour in the system in terms of how arrangements are regularly reviewed. Cases flagged as Child Protection are looked at immediately upon receipt. Officers gave examples of potential reasons for assessments falling out of timescale and assured members these are for valid reasons, Principal Officers are kept informed and all the steps that fall out of timeframe are quality assured.

Members referred to item 5 of page 142, and questioned the decrease, as the same difficulties would have appeared the previous year. Officers confirmed that the review is carried out similarly to what has been outlined previously. No review will go out of timescale without approval from a Principal Officer. The officer outlined the reasons that may cause a review to be delayed, reviews are not held if a child wants to attend and is unable to or where attendance would interfere with employment or education opportunities. Similarly, if a parent/carer cannot attend or a professional has not provided a report for that review, the review would be rescheduled. Officers confirmed that any reviews out of timescales are regularly reviewed for patterns/trends & themes in order to address any issues.

The Director of Social Services, Health & Housing confirmed there were many reasons why statutory reviews are not carried out within timeframe, and suggested this issue should be looked at in more detail and a report will be brought to committee on this matter. There can become a culture of accepting reasons why reviews are not held.

Members referred to page 183 of the report and questioned if there was a link between discharged looked after children and any of the children admitted on the Child Protection Register? Is there any trend in term of the timescale towards school holidays? Officers confirmed at this time there are no discharged looked after children being referred onto the Child Protection Register. The Head of Childrens Services advised members that much work been done on re-referrals to the Child Protection Register.

The Chair queried whether the mention of 47 non-fatal overdoses was through a person trying to take their life or accidental. Officers confirmed that the figures in the report related to non-fatal accidental overdoses that the Area Planning Board is required to monitor under guidance from Welsh Government. The Area Planning Board works across the Western Bay, the figure of 47 relates to Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. There were 12 instances in Neath Port Talbot and 35 in Swansea.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

7. **Committee Action Log**

Members noted the committee action log.

8. **Forward Work Programme 2023/24**

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

9. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

10. **Access to meetings**

Resolved: to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

11. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

Business Case For Establishing An In-House Adult Family Placement Service (Pages 203 - 300)

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

In-house delivery of Assistive Technology Installations, Maintenance and Removals (Pages 301 - 324)

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

Audit Report No. 13 - Hillside Secure Children's Home. (Pages 325 - 346)

The report was noted.

CHAIRPERSON