

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

30 July 2015

Chairman: Councillor Mrs.D.Jones

Vice Chairman: Councillor Mrs.A.Wingrave

Councillors: Mrs P.Bebell, J.S.Evans, H.N.James, J.Miller,
A.Taylor, J.Warman and D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance Mrs.A.Thomas, S. Adie, Mrs C.Jones, M.Jones,
Potts and S. Sullivan

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.D.Richards and J.Rogers

1. **MINUTES OF THE SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH JUNE 2015**

The Committee noted the minutes.

2. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15.**

The Committee noted and agreed the Forward Work Programme.

3. **DIRECT SERVICES REPORT CARD**

Members considered the Direct Services Report Card which was the first to be presented to the Committee as part of the new performance management framework of the Council.

Members drew attention to the abbreviations and acronyms used throughout the report and asked for this to be kept to a minimum in future.

Members asked for details on the multi-media care plans and were informed that they include using a secure web based portal which incorporates multi-media software such as video and social media to review how a service is delivering for a particular service user. Members heard how they can be accessed by families and social workers as evidence of competence towards set learning outcomes.

Members were pleased to see the reduction in sickness absence levels from 6.8% in April to 5.9% in May but they queried if there were particular reasons why certain teams seemed to have higher levels of absence than others. Officers informed the Committee that certain teams work with service users who have complex and high dependency needs with multiple manual handling and personal care issues; the main reasons for sickness absence are back complaints, colds and flu and sickness bugs. Members were pleased to see that the service was continuing to manage sickness with a zero tolerance approach and the policy and the dedicated HR support was assisting them to do so.

Members queried why the staff supervision percentage was only 58% and asked what was being done to address this and by when could they expect to see an improvement. Officers explained that this low figure was mainly attributable to one manager and this was being addressed and an improvement should be evident by October 2015.

Members asked if all staff had had an appraisal and a Personal Development Review by the 1st July deadline that was included in the report. Officers informed the Members that this wasn't yet complete and the team were in the process of working through all staff. Members heard that the process had been delayed by the reduction of staff in the section by 25% from the latest ER/VR exercise but planned to complete this action by October 2015. Members noted that the corporate appraisals were being used at present but a version was being adapted to be more relevant to the service and this would be rolled out upon completion and after approval at Personnel Committee.

Members questioned the fact that not all services had a full risk assessment in place and were pleased to learn that this was being addressed in line with care standards throughout the service.

Members were pleased to note that there had been no incidents of DOL's (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) or Child Protection

reported and asked if all members of staff were up to date in their training in these areas.

Members felt the report card format was useful and they valued the insight into the service areas that they allow for. They requested that all service areas within the purview of the Committee schedule their report cards into the Work Programme for the Committee.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals:

4.1 Performance Report- Quarter 4

Members received the Social Services, Health and Housing Quarterly Performance Indicator Data for Quarter 4 as detailed within the circulated report.

Members questioned the increase in the number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant which had increased from 204 days in 13/14 to 252 days in 14/15. Officers informed Members that this was a cumulative figure but there had been an increase in the more complex grants being completed including complex extensions for children with disabilities.

In relation to the information presented on vacant properties, Members queried if more could be done to target particular properties and Officers drew Members' attention to the 'Enforced Sales Policy' which can be utilised for some of the properties in question.

Members asked for information on the costs relating to the number of days spent by homeless households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Officers were unsure of the specific costs but assured the Committee they would find out and report the actual figures back to them.

Members were pleased to hear that the percentage of carers being offered an assessment or review in their own right was 100% and that the uptake of the reviews has increased.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

4.2 Food Standards Agency Audit Report

The Committee received the Food Standards Agency Audit Feedback Report following their audit of Food Hygiene, Food Standards and Animal Feeding Stuffs enforcement at this Authority as detailed within the circulated report.

Members heard that the audit had taken place in May 2014 and work on the action plan to address key areas for improvement had been in progress. Similarly, Officers informed Members that four additional Environmental Health Officers and two additional Trading Standards Officers were being recruited to strengthen the work of the unit.

Members raised concern at the findings of the report and stressed how important it is for members of the public to have assurance and confidence that Food Standards are of the highest priority throughout the County Borough. They were pleased that there was an action plan in place to address key areas for improvement and in light of this it was agreed that Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendation:

- 'That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet Board that the action plan to address the Food Standards Agency Report recommendations is brought to the next meeting of the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board.

Taking into consideration the above recommendation, following scrutiny it was agreed that the report be noted.

4.3 Pest Control Call Out Fee

Members received the amendment of pest control charges as contained within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the current £25 domestic fee for pest control services is to become a non-refundable £25 call out fee but that the service the public receives will remain unchanged.

Members asked how the public would be informed of the fact that the fee is now non-refundable. Officers explained that websites had been updated and that customer services officers had been briefed and the 'scripts' that they use while speaking to members of the public had been altered to include the new information.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

4.4 Legal Highs

The Committee received the report from Environmental Health and Trading Standards informing them of the work of the Trading Standards Team in relation to Legal Highs.

Members were informed that these new 'Psychoactive Substances' are controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and within the County Borough there is one known premises openly selling such products although there are suspicions that there are other premises doing so. Members saw examples of packaging designed to be attractive to young people and discussed the range of potential offences which either the Police or Trading Standards can pursue.

Members discussed a range of concerns in relation to 'legal highs' including issues in the community and families, debt, and mental and physical health concerns. Members appreciated the vigilance from the teams involved and were encouraged to learn that there is a large partnership agenda around this issue. They heard that 'legal highs' are the focus of Community Safety and Local Service Board priorities and that there is a significant communication and education programme surrounding the issue and the Committee agreed that it was important to send strong messages jointly to not buy them and not to use them.

Members looked forward to further reports being brought back to Committee with updates.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

4.5 Local Housing Strategy

The Committee received the Local Housing Strategy as contained within the circulated report.

Members' attention was drawn to the recommendation which had been amended as the Local Housing Strategy required adoption by Council and not the Cabinet Board in this instance.

The recommendation had been amended to:

'Having given due regard to the EIA it is recommended that the Neath Port Talbot Local Housing Strategy be supported and commended to Council for approval.'

Following scrutiny, and taking into consideration the amended recommendation the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

4.6 Amendments to Joint Allocation Policy

The Committee received the amendments to the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and NPT Homes as contained within the circulated report.

Members agreed it was important that the close working with NPT Homes continued.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

4.7 Renaming and Rebranding of the Vocational Skills Centre

The Committee received the Work, Training and Employment Service proposals to rename and rebrand the Vocational Skills Centre as detailed within the circulated report.

Members complimented the work of the centre and welcomed the invitation from Officers to attend the Open Day at the Centre which was being held on August 14th 2015.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

4.8 Urgency Action 0853-Indemnity Provider Costs

The Committee received information in relation to an urgency action determined by the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing in relation to Indemnity Provider Costs. Members queried the costs in question and Officers committed to bringing that information back to the next meeting of the Committee and Cabinet Board.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

5. ACCESS TO MEETINGS

Resolved: that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 , the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

6. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals:

6.1 Social Housing Grant Programme and Affordable Housing

The Committee received the Social Housing Grant Programme as contained in the circulated report.

Members noted that spend within the programme supported the delivery of new affordable housing in the Borough. It was further noted that there is close collaboration with Housing partners on the delivery of the schemes within the programme.

Members asked if the scheme was cost neutral and Officers explained that while the money for the programme doesn't come directly to the Local Authority we as the strategic housing authority decide how and where it is spent.

Members asked for more information on 'Land Banking' and Officers explained the scheme being offered by Welsh Government whereby Housing Associations can bid for a loan to purchase land.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON