

## **SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)**

**Members Present:**

**20 October 2016**

**Chairperson:** Councillor Mrs.D.Jones

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor Mrs.A.Wingrave

**Councillors:** A.Carter, J.S.Evans, Mrs.S.Paddison, J.Miller,  
A.Taylor and D.Whitelock

**Officers In Attendance** Mrs.A.Thomas, Ms.G.Hargest and Ms.C.Gadd

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

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1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER**

Members highlighted that it had been asked what the take up of direct payments had been and requested that information on the role of Swansea Bay and the take up of other Local Authorities in the region had been. Officers agreed to circulate this information and explained that there had not been Swansea Bay involvement in Neath Port Talbot's development of direct payments and the Council was ahead of other Local Authorities in the region.

The Minutes were noted by the Committee.

2. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017**

The Forward Work Programme was noted by the Committee.

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

## Cabinet Board Proposals

### 3.1 Social Services Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2015-16

The Committee received the report on the operation of the Directorate's Complaints and Representation procedures from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, including comparisons, where relevant, against activities in previous years, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Annual Report attached at Appendix 1 provided Members with a summary of the representation and complaint activities during 2015-16. It was highlighted that there had been a lot of work undertaken to educate managers and frontline staff to resolve complaints at first point of contact. There had also been team building exercises on the lessons learned.

Members noted that there had been 27 stage one complaints for Hillside Secure Unit and queried who the complaints were from and the areas they were complaining about. Officers explained that the complaints had been received by young people in Hillside. The complaints had been regarding such issues as not enough leisure time and sanctions that had been imposed. It was noted that it was not uncommon to have these types of complaints in a secure unit. It was highlighted that the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board received regular reports on Hillside, which included information on complaints.

Members asked if Officers recorded the reasons for all complaints and would they be able to identify any trends. Officers confirmed that this was the case and there had been progress over the last few years in complaint resolution at stage one.

Members noted that in table 5 - Complaints Outcomes 2015/16 there was an 'other' category and queried what was classed under this category. Officers informed them that they were complaints that were no longer under the remit of the Committee, as Trading Standards and Environmental Health had been the responsibility of the Social Services, Health and

Housing Directorate during 2015/16 and had since been taken over by the Environment Directorate.

Members queried if there was a set length of agreed extension times for responding to complaints. Officers explained that most complaints were responded to within ten working days, however, where required an extension would be agreed with the complainant. There was no set extension time and it would be dependent on the complexity of the complaint.

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

### 3.2 NPT Homes Progress Report – to September 2016

The Committee received the report to provide Members with an overview of progress made by NPT Homes in respect of the promises made to tenants in the Council's Offer Document, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that as part of the Transfer Agreement NPT Homes provided half yearly update reports to this Committee. The action plan attached at Appendix 1 showed the status of the promises. It was noted that no further promises had been completed since the last report, however, good progress had been made with the Welsh Housing Quality Standards programme.

Members commented that they had received positive feedback from residents that had benefitted from new kitchens and bathrooms. Members noted that in some areas there had been waste left by contractors that was being used by young people to start fires and this was a particular concern with bonfire night approaching. It was agreed that this information would be fed back.

Members were provided with an update on Welfare Rights and the introduction of Universal Credit. Key working partnerships had been established with the Local Authority and other support agencies. It was noted that the Benefits Section had been very helpful.

It was highlighted that NPT Homes had used a co-design approach with tenants to work on a number of areas of the

business, which allowed a joint approach to work out the best solution together. Residents were able to identify what was most important to them. There had been success with this approach for tenants living in accommodation for over 55s and the same approach was being used for the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Members queried the language used in relation to the co-design approach in respect of tenants being “happy” to lose some services. It was explained that it referred to tenants being happy to be involved in the process and able to make decisions about what services they prioritised.

Members asked if there was co-operation between NPT Homes and owner/occupiers in their areas. It was explained that any complaints received from owner/occupiers were taken seriously and they did not distinguish between tenant complaints and other complaints. If a complaint was regarding a tenant or their accommodation they would be able to deal with it relatively quickly. However, it was highlighted that there was nothing NPT Homes could do in relation to a complaint about a privately owned property.

Members highlighted that they had previously asked for information on damp in NPT Homes’ properties. This information was circulated to the Committee during the meeting.

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

### 3.3 Elected Members Visits to Social Care and Nursing Homes

The Committee received the review of progress to date following the completion of a Lay Assessor Pilot programme and the continuation of the programme, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the feedback from the pilot visits had been positive from both the providers and Members involved. It was noted that there had been a few teething problems that had been addressed and improved the streamlining of reports. It was highlighted that Officers monitored the regulatory requirements of Care and Nursing Homes and the visits from Members provided an extra element and added value.

It was highlighted that there were 26 Care and Nursing Homes in Neath Port Talbot and each pair of Members would be required to undertake an average of six visits per year. Members noted that the recommendation referred to Lay Assessors and asked for clarity on whether this would be all Elected Members or just the Members of the Committee. Officers confirmed that it would be the Members of the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. Members requested that this amendment to the recommendation was considered by the Cabinet Board.

Members noted that the visits would be 'unannounced' and queried if they would be completely unannounced or would the home receive any warning at all. Officers confirmed that it would be completely unannounced, however, homes would be aware that the programme was in place and what to expect. It was noted that the Members would meet with the Manager of the Home when they announced themselves and they could then be made aware of any issues that would affect the visit.

Members asked if monitoring officers visits to the homes were unannounced. It was explained that normally their visits were unannounced, except where there was an action plan for improvements in place and evidence was required from the home during a visit.

Members queried who would set the timetable of visits and they were informed that Officers would plan the timescale of the visits and Members could then decide when it would best suit them.

Members asked if newer Members of the Committee would receive the training that those in the pilot had received. It was confirmed that they would. It was queried if the training would result in Members having a preconceived idea of what they should look for in the Homes and they were not experts. Officers explained that the training was regarding dignity in care and dementia in care to help to prepare Members to react appropriately in certain situations.

Members requested more detailed feedback on the pilot project and how successful the programme had been. Officers elaborated on the positive outcomes that had resulted from the visits, which included some improved policies and in one home

the replacement of a carpet. It was agreed that a detailed summary of the findings would be reported at a future meeting of the Committee.

Members asked when the programme would commence and they were informed that it was likely to be the beginning of 2017, as this would allow time for the remit of the programme to be discussed with the Care Homes.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board, with the amendment that Members of the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee be specified as the Lay Assessors.

#### 3.4 Information, Advice and Assistance Service

The Committee received the report on the existing Family Information System to be developed to help meet the new statutory duty on Social Services to establish an Information, Advice and Assistance Service, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that Officers were unable to present the report due to other urgent commitments. Members commented that they welcomed the proposals and were pleased that the Service was being developed in house. It was noted that other organisations had outsourced similar services and they had not worked well.

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

### 4. 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 paragraph 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12 A to the above Act.

## 5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

### Cabinet Board Proposals

#### 5.1 Consultant Procurement (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

The Committee received the private report to exclude Rule 2 of Council's Contracts Procedure Rules for the engagement of Interim Principal Officers within Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the personnel elements of the post had been approved by Personnel Committee and this report was specifically regarding the procurement and contracting elements. It was noted that Community Care Services had encountered significant recruitment and retention issues within its Senior Management Team and it was considered in the best interests of the Council to proceed with these arrangements to ensure the specialist expertise and knowledge were in place to lead the Service through this period of significant improvement and budget reductions. It was noted that the cost of the contracts had been offset by other savings made in the Directorate. It was highlighted that the work of the Officers had also resulted in savings required by the Directorate being delivered.

Members requested clarity on Rule 2 and why it needed to be excluded. The details of Rule 2 were explained and the provisions within the Council's Constitution to suspend this rule when required. It was noted that the contracts were time limited and expertise was required to develop certain services. The interim Principal Officers would also be training staff whilst they were in post.

Members asked if the Directorate had tried to recruit permanent employees into the posts and it was confirmed that they had and had been unsuccessful. It was noted that this issue had been further addressed by a recent report to personnel committee on re-advertising of the posts.

Members discussed the requirements for delegated authority and contractual arrangements. Members requested more

information on consultancy arrangements across the Council. Members asked what was preventing consultants walking away from the Council in the middle of the development of services and it was explained that this would be addressed as part of the contract.

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

## 5.2 Repayment of Grant Monies (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

The Committee received the private report to request to waive a repayment of grant monies, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried if there was anyway the money could be recovered and officers confirmed that there was not.

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

**CHAIRPERSON**