

SOCIAL CARE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 April 2018

Chairperson: Councillor L.M.Purcell

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: A.Llewelyn, H.C.Clarke, A.P.H.Davies, C.Galsworthy, H.N.James, J.Miller, S.Paddison, S.H.Reynolds, D.Whitelock and C.Williams

Officers In Attendance Mrs.A.Thomas, Ms.K.Warren, J.Hodges, Chele.Howard, K.Jones, L.Livingstone, Stuart Mason, Mrs.S.Rees, J. Davies, N. Jones and S. Curran

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.D.Richards

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr S Freeguard: Report of the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing re: Mental Health Services Strategic Delivery Plan 2018-19 as she is a Member of the ABMU Community Health Council.

2. MINUTES OF THE SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2018

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2018.

In relation to the item on the Western Bay Area Plan for Care and Support Needs 2018-23 the Committee noted that where concern had been raised ‘...for those people that may need to move away

from their communities' they stated that this concern had been in relation to those people who had to move away from their communities in order to access residential care and requested that this be included in the Minutes for that item.

With the above amendments the Committee noted the minutes.

3. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

4. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AVAILABLE FOR STAFF TO REPORT CONCERNS ABOUT SAFEGUARDING OR OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS**

Members received information in relation to the policies and procedures available for staff to report concerns about safeguarding or other employment matters as contained within the circulated report.

Members noted that there was an emphasis on resolving complaints and issues early and informally where possible.

Members asked when the policies referenced had been reviewed and were informed that the Dignity at Work and the Whistleblowing Policies had been reviewed in August 2015, and that the Grievance Policy was reviewed in 2013 and will be due for further review this year.

The Committee asked for further information in relation to the involvement of Trade Unions in policy development and review. It was explained that consultation is carried out fully when new policies are under development and suggested updates at review stage are taken through Joint Working Groups.

Members asked for further information on the Conflict Resolution Officers (CRO's) who are recruited from within the Council and trained to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from dignity at work complaints. It was explained that CROs are employees who have volunteered for the role, and have been selected and trained to support staff. They are a mixed group by age, gender and profession across Directorates but do not replace the support offered to employees by their Trade Union representatives.

Members queried if the library of policies is easily and readily available to staff. They were informed that for those staff who have online access the policies are easily accessible via the Council's intranet site. Members were notified that work is ongoing to develop the Employee Portal to further enhance the information available to those employees without direct work online access.

The Committee noted Appendix E of the Employee Code of Conduct which specifically deals with the relationship between elected Councillors and employees and that should an employee have a grievance about their employment a direct approach to Councillors by staff is not permitted. The Committee were informed that if they are approached directly by a member of staff they should refer them back to their line manager and signpost to the appropriate policy. The Committee recognised the existing mechanisms whereby there is Councillor involvement; such as Staffing Appeals Committee and the recruitment and dismissal of Chief Officers.

Following scrutiny it was agreed that the report be noted.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 **Residential and Non-Residential Care Charging Policy**

The Committee received information in relation to the Residential and Non- Residential Care Charging Policy as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked if the funding received from Welsh Government was sufficient and were informed that the additional funding levels received are closely monitored to ensure that appropriate amounts are received.

The Committee noted that for cases where residential care stays exceed 8 weeks but are less than 52 weeks Residential Charging Assessments are carried out on a temporary (Extended Care) basis and property is only taken into account when long term placements are required but will be disregarded in certain circumstances i.e. where a spouse is still living at the address.

Members were concerned about the potential situation of charging higher fees to private residents in order to subsidise Council placements. Officers explained that a framework exists and that this situation is closely monitored with regular meetings being held with providers.

It was noted that on-costs are not included in the fee amounts stated in the circulated report.

Members were reminded that the Council had entered into a 25 year contract with Pobl Group.

The Committee asked for a list of Care Homes that provide a service with no 'top up' fees and were informed that the nature of the 'top up' is continually monitored.

Members raised concern at the levels of poverty among service users and were assured that affordability is considered and close working links are fostered with colleagues in agencies such as Welfare Rights, POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) and South Wales Police.

The Committee discussed why service users do not share their financial information and noted that they are continually encouraged to do so but that it remains a personal choice.

Members were reminded that the Pobl Group could be invited to participate in a scrutiny session and the Committee looked forward to this session being arranged

Following scrutiny the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered at Cabinet Board.

5.2 Mental Health Services Strategic Delivery Plan

The Committee received information in relation to the Mental Health Services Strategic Delivery Plan as contained within the circulated report.

Members asked officers if they were confident that progress against the Mental Health action plan could be undertaken in a timely manner. Officers explained that progress has been slow

at times, as working with other partner agencies can sometimes present challenges with regards to timescales but that continual feedback on progress would be provided to Members.

The Committee discussed issues that service users face when living in supported living accommodation and were encouraged to hear about the ongoing work with colleagues in the Environment Directorate to consider all issues such as parking and the street-scene environment.

Members discussed the emphasis of caring for people in their own homes but were concerned about the services that lay outside of the Council's control. Members recognised the importance of a joined up strategic vision and the role of the Public Services Board in continuing to prioritise this with partners in Health but recognised the challenging environment in which the services operate.

Members looked forward to receiving continual progress reports to future meetings of the Committee as and when they become available.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered at Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON