

## SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

**Members Present:**

**12 May 2016**

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

**Councillors:** H.M.Bebell, J.Miller, L.M.Purcell, C.Morgan,  
R.Thomas and D.Whitelock

**Officers In Attendance** N. Jarman, A.Jarrett, L . Livingsgtone and  
N.Evans

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

**Observers** Mrs L. Whitacker (Chief Executive NPT Homes)

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1. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 APRIL 2016**

Noted by the Committee.

2. **PRE SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

**Cabinet Board Proposals**

i. **NPT Homes Progress Update to April 2016**

Members considered a report that was presented by the Chief Executive of NPT Homes who informed Members that the report was the latest six month update report on progress against the promises made on transfer of the Council's housing stock.

Members were informed that a great deal of work had been undertaken to engage with tenants to understand what they require. The end result has been the service is being delivered within budget.

Information was provided on how services were being delivered differently. For example, ABMU were holding pain clinics were now held in communal areas within sheltered accommodation rather than at the hospital. The accommodation is provided free of charge but the benefits outweigh the costs.

Members noted that a great deal of work had been undertaken with regard Universal Credit and NPT Homes has developed close links with the Council, Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus with a view to assisting tenants. In relation to the bedroom tax all affected tenants were offered up to three separate meetings with financial advisors to address any issues.

Members asked whether the number of cases for Universal Credit (UC) was on the increase and how this would affect the organisation. It was confirmed that although only around 100 tenants had been put onto UC this would increase to over 4,000 by 2021. The rate of increase will quicken as Government changes the groups subject to Universal Credit however, the final date for all people to be transitioned onto the system is 2021.

The progress against the promises was noted by Members who asked for assurance that the works required to take every house to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard would be done by March 2017. It was confirmed that the works could be completed by September however, NPT homes had taken a decision to scale back the works and aim for the March completion date as this would mean there would not be a large amount of job losses in one single point in time. By using the original timescales it will allow the workers to find alternative work through different contracts.

Members confirmed that there had been numerous representations made in relation to damp within houses following the addition of cavity wall insulation (which was undertaken prior to stock transfer). It was confirmed that NPT Homes were aware of this and work was being undertaken to address it. Members requested that a report be brought back to a future meeting on the number of cases of damp and the timescales for rectifying the problems.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

ii. Direct Service – Community Integrated Model

Members considered a report that asked them to agree to one of three options for the future of Direct Services.

Members were advised that this was the next step in the transforming adult social care programme that had been running for 3 years. Members were advised that there were no areas that would be left alone and all service areas would be reviewed at some point.

Officers stated that if Option One was selected then services would continue to be provided but there would be a need to identify £750,000 funding to address the maintenance backlog on the respective premises.

Members were advised that the consultation undertaken had been unprecedented and had been extensive and genuine and all the responses were reflected in the report. It was confirmed that there was a small minority of people who were vocal against any changes but this was to be expected when change is suggested.

It was agreed that Option One would be the easiest option to take but the finance to continue would need to be found from elsewhere and this was not thought to be achievable.

Members queried information contained within the report with regards eligibility for services and in particular any who may be potentially ineligible. Clarity was sought on the possible numbers and would the individuals have a right of appeal. Officers stated that any individual who needs a service would require an assessment and there will be certain individuals who will not receive the same package that they currently have. It was agreed that there will be some form of formal review service to be set up to ensure that people will get what they require even if it is delivered in a different way.

Officers confirmed that there would also be a right of appeal for individuals.

Members raised concerns about individuals who may not be able to express an opinion due to their needs and are these included within the 18 identified as individuals with significant need. Officers confirmed that the individuals are treated the same as any other case with the only difference being specialist social workers assess these

cases to ensure that the package in place meets the individual's needs.

It was noted that within the report it was mentioned that potentially there could be an adverse effect on some carers and also some carers will see an impact on their current provision. Concern was also raised that risk management did not mention this possibility and Members asked for assurance that the Council would not be challenged on this in the future. Officers stated that with all change there will be risks but the key is how the risks are managed. The main issue will be that an in depth assessment will be undertaken which will ensure that needs are met.

Further concern was raised in relation to transport particularly around the statement contained within the report that transport may be "logistically and financially unviable". It was confirmed that this would be one of the main changes in that a transport assessment would now be undertaken at the same time as a needs assessment. Transport would now be seen as an assessed need and not as a given.

Members asked whether it would be possible for everyone affected to be allocated a social worker to undertake the assessment and develop support. Officers confirmed that there were sufficient resources available to undertake this work. An example was provided that if a social worker had 30 cases then they would be able to see their clients once every 15 days, but this was not a problem. Further confirmation was given that meetings had been held with the Social Work teams and they themselves had confirmed they could cope. It was further stressed that there never have been nor there ever be proposals on the table to reduce the amount of social workers.

Members noted that during the consultation many consultees had referred to the value of a base, referring to the sense of familiarity and friendship. Members asked if assurance could be given that if option 3 was selected then expressed need will be satisfied. It was confirmed that assessed need will be met through completion of the assessment. It should be further highlighted though that individuals will continue to meet with their friends but also this was an opportunity to perhaps extend the friendship and continue it in a different way.

Members noted the excellent work that Your Voice had undertaken on the consultation. With this in mind Members thought that it would

be useful for them to undertake a visit to Monmouthshire to see how the services are run there. It was agreed that this will be arranged in the near future.

Members asked whether the “clubbing together” was the best way for service users to access services. It was confirmed that this was the case. Members were further advised that this is not about cutting or removing services but delivering them in a different way.

Members asked why was Patch being closed as a community facility and it was confirmed that Patch is a closed facility for people with learning disabilities and was not a community facility.

Further assurances were made that if the decision to go ahead with option 3 was taken then implementation would not be rushed and that there was significant work to be undertake to get it right.

Following scrutiny the Committee was supportive of Option Three to be considered by Cabinet Board.

## **CHAIRPERSON**