

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Tuesday, 4th November 2014 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) M E Davies – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

W J David	C Davies	A S Fox
(Mrs) S Jones	S Lloyd	(Mrs) A Roberts
R W Smith	L G Walker	D H Williams

Officers:

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services
Mr R Gatis – Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention
Mr A Gwynn – Service Director, Children's Services
Mr A Wilkins – Head of Legal, Democratic and Corporate
Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

24. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Evans, I Pearce, (Mrs) S Rees, (Mrs) J Rosser, B Stephens and (Mrs) J S Ward.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Community and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 8th October 2014.

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

27. SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING ACT: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services in respect of the overarching expectations which arise from the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and an implementation programme for

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Members noted that the report had been presented to Cabinet on 30th October 2014.

The report informed Members on the legislative process and the vision behind the Act which will be implemented in April 2016 and which creates a new framework for local authorities and health to engage with and empower citizens, bringing them closer to the decisions about the services which affect them, and also address the challenges of demographic and economic change. The report explained that the Act requires that services should be developed on the same footprint as the local Health Board and that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will act as the lead agency to support delivery of the implementation programme across the Cwm Taf region.

The Committee considered the report and questioned Officers.

Members questioned whether the delivery deadlines within Appendix 2 which set out Cwm Taf's application for funding from the Welsh Government's Delivering Transformation Grant for 2014/15 were on track. Members also asked how scrutiny of the new arrangements could be undertaken.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services explained that the grant submission process had very tight timescales and the prescribed delivery dates on key milestones were in many cases very ambitious. He reported that one of the Council's Adult Services Locality Managers had been appointed as Regional Transformation Manager on a part time basis which would assist in making best use of the grant money. He explained that not all of the requirements of the Act could be achieved through partnership and that there was considerable work for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council to undertake in readiness for its introduction. He further explained that once the self assessment toolkit was developed work could begin on developing the regional implementation plan and that there would be a role for scrutiny at this stage. He also assured Members that Rhondda Cynon Taf would not enter into joint arrangements for the delivery of services unless it was in the best interest of the Council and he suggested that in the first instance, Members might wish to concentrate their efforts on scrutinising the impact of the Act on the Council pointing out that if necessary the Health Board or voluntary/private sector providers could be invited to attend the Committee when appropriate.

Members questioned whether the current SWIFT electronic system used by the department would need to be replaced as a result of the integration between Health and Social Care and raised concern at the potential financial implications.

Officers explained that there was no immediate plan to change from using the SWIFT system which was 'fit for purpose' with regard to local authorities. It was explained that there has been some work undertaken which has been funded to date by NHS Wales on the possibility of developing a national database but that a move to a national system would be some way into the future.

Members questioned the role that the 3rd Sector was expected to play at a time when their budgets were also being cut. A Member also pointed out that he was aware that in some areas the support provided for the elderly/vulnerable was already much less than that provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf. He was concerned by this especially as there are not always local community support systems in place. The Group Director reported that both Interlink and Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil had a critical role to play in delivering the expectations of the Act. He explained that the Welsh Government envisage the Act to be cost neutral and whilst most would agree in principal to a move toward building more community resilience and community based services, in an area of high deprivation there was a risk.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) to note the content of the report;
- (ii) that a presentation be made to a future meeting of the Committee providing more detail on the implications of the Act and that the Committee receives further updates as and when appropriate.
- (iii) that Members of the Committee be circulated with the link to the electronic resource produced by the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA), in relation to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014.

28. CWN TAF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board 2013/14 which provided details of its key accountabilities and how the Board is structured to deliver its work. The report also provided a comprehensive account of the achievements of the Board and each of its sub groups over the year as well as the priorities for improvement for 2014/15.

Members considered the report and asked what support was in place for social workers dealing directly with vulnerable children and their families. The Service Director, Children's Services explained that there was a range of support available which included regular supervision with line managers, complimentary training and the multi agency Safeguarding Board itself. Staff also had access to the Occupational Health services. The Service Director reported that the department took the duty of care to its staff very seriously and that a workforce planning group had also been set up which included representation from Human Resources and a range of staff at different levels within the organisation to consider what actions could be taken to improve the working environment and improve staff retention. The Service Director responded to further questions by explaining that staff were aware of the support services in place and were regularly reminded of these as part of their supervision sessions. He reported that apart from staff sickness and maternity leave, the department would be fully staffed once all the new recruits were in post.

RESOLVED: to note the content of the report.

29. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2013/14

The Committee considered the report of the Group Director in respect of the Social Services Annual Complaints Report 2013/14 which included information on the new Guidance and Regulations in relation to Social Services Representations and Complaints which was implemented with effect 1st August 2014. The report also provided information on lessons learnt from complaints and performance data for Adults & Children's Social Services together with achievements for 2013/14 and future developments.

Members considered the report commenting that it was a positive report given the demand for services. However, Members noted the rise in complaints which related to 'staffing issues' and 'failure to provide a service' and it was agreed that further information be obtained and circulated to Members.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the contents of the report and the changes to Guidance and Regulations in relation to Social Care Representations and Complaints;
- (ii) that Members be provided with further details in respect of complaints related to 'staffing issues' and 'failure to provide a service'.

(Mrs) M D Davies
Chairman

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm.