

MINUTES of the meeting of Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber - Brockington on Thursday 12 September 2013 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor JG Jarvis (Chairman)
Councillor SJ Robertson (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, PL Bettington, WLS Bowen, KS Guthrie, JLV Kenyon, MD Lloyd-Hayes, J Stone, GA Vaughan-Powell and PJ Watts

In attendance: Councillors JW Millar (Cabinet Member, Children's Wellbeing) and AJW Powers

Officers: J Davidson (Director For People's Services), G Dean (Scrutiny Officer), P Griffiths (Divisional Business Manager), J Jones (Head of Governance), J Rzezniczek (Interim Head of Improvement) and DJ Penrose (Governance Services)

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs JG Lester and SJ Robertson.

64. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11 July 2013 were approved and signed as a correct record.

67. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

There were no suggestions from members of the public.

68. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

69. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL, SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN SIX MONTH REVIEW REPORT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Committee received a report on the progress of improvement planning in children's safeguarding which had resulted from the self-evaluation that had been reported to the Department of Education in July, 2013 in relation to the Herefordshire Safeguarding and Protecting Children Improvement. The Director for People's Services highlighted the following areas:

- That the changes to leadership and governance that had been made over the period had contributed to the satisfactory progress that the Department had highlighted in their letter to the Council. The Department was also taken by the evidence of the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and partner organisations.

The Interim Head of Improvement reported that this process would be undertaken every six months, and was not an inspection per se. It was possible that there could be an Ofsted inspection anytime from November 2013. She went on to say that:

- There had been significant turnover in front line and middle agency managers over the last six months. At the point of the initial inspection, the ratio of permanent to agency staff had been better. AS a result of staff turnover it had been necessary to take on agency staff in order to grow the existing workforce quickly. As a result of the newly qualified social worker assessment days, eight new staff had been taken on.
- The performance data around the timelines associated with the speed and timeliness of assessments was of concern.
- Recruitment and retention of social workers was the main issue facing the Council, as well as strengthening both the management and social worker practice.
- A social worker academy should help to ensure that they felt sufficiently trained and supported to do their jobs. A new range of practice tools was also being instigated which would help the situation and influence the ability to offer timely assessments.

The Director went on to say that, in the longer term, workload and morale issues would be addressed. There was a mix of both high and low morale at the moment and work was in hand to find ways to bring down the casework load for all areas. This was not just for social workers, but also for all family support workers. The biggest cause for concern was the quality of practice decision making, which would have to be improved. She added that there would be a peer review of the Council's work in October, and colleagues from around the country would be invited to Hereford in order to provide fresh insight and suggest alternative solutions to issues.

In reply to a comment from a Member regarding staff retention, she concurred that newly qualified Council staff were paid adequately, but within a competitive market, the higher end managerial staff were not remunerated as well in the County as they were in the rest of the country. As a result, there were more agency than permanent managerial staff. Front line management levels of pay would be increased in order to help solve this problem.

In reply to a comment from a Member, the Director went on to say that the comments made in paragraph 8.27 and 8.28 of the report before the committee were a fair summation of the position that the Council was in. Whilst there was much to be done, the peer review process would be very helpful to this end.

In reply to a further comment, she went on to say that there had been changes to the probation services, and the Youth Offending Service had been replaced by the West Mercia Youth Offending Service, and a discussion was underway between the partners as to who should host the service. She undertook to provide Members with a briefing paper on the matter.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- (a) The report be noted; and**
- (b) A further update report be provided to the Committee in three months time.**

70. HEALTHWATCH

The Committee received a presentation on Healthwatch Herefordshire. The Divisional Business Manager said that procurement for the service had begun in September 2012. There had been a public consultation with guidance from Healthwatch England, and it had been decided that a local service which would be locally delivered should be commissioned with a 2 year contract in order to create a sustainable service. A full procurement process had been undertaken in December 2012, and the contract had been awarded to HVOSS (Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service) in March 2013. The service had needed to be operational by 1 April, and partnership working had been undertaken in order to ensure that this had been possible.

The Chief Executive of HVOSS reported that the end of the first six month development phase had been reached, and there was now a joint partnership between HVOSS and Herefordshire Carers Support in place. The model that was being used in the County sought to maximise opportunities to access local networks and make the best of local resources. He went on to say that:

- The Healthwatch Board was now in place, and was supported in its work by three staff.
- That an independent brand for Healthwatch had been built, separately from either HVOSS or Herefordshire Carers Support.

The Chairman of Healthwatch commented that:

- It had been 56 days since he had taken up his post, and in that time the organisation's Board and staff had been also been appointed.
- The next phase of activity was a series of planned community engagement events in order to raise public awareness.
- There was strategic involvement with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- He expected Board members to be actively involved in activities within the community.
- That the organisation would be open and transparent with its conversations with healthcare and care providers and, as a professional service for evidence gathering, would refer issues to the Care Quality Commission where appropriate. Healthwatch would not hesitate to raise issues of concern regarding organisations, providing concrete evidence had been provided.
- The public were confused about the current health and social care landscape in the County, and Healthwatch would be as supportive to organisations as possible

In reply to a question from a Member, he said Healthwatch Board Members were remunerated, and that this had been a decision taken by the commissioners.

RESOLVED: That Healthwatch would be invited to attend every meeting of the Committee, and would provide formal reports on a six monthly basis

71. TASK & FINISH REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEXT STAGE INTEGRATION PROJECT (TO FOLLOW)

The Committee considered the findings arising from the Task & Finish Review Group – Adult Social Care Next Stage Integration Project.

The Chairman thanked the Members of the Group for the work that they had put into the report. He said that there was now a good working relationship between the Council and the Wye Valley NHS Trust which, together with the general improvement in relationships between partners that had been noted throughout the Review, was encouraging.

One of the key issues was that of consultation, which had been perceived as being less than effectual and a recommendation had been included which addressed this issue.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Recommendation 7 should be changed to widen it to read that ‘a Council Member should be named as an advocate for those with learning difficulties’.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (a) The Committee considered the report of the Task & Finish Group – Adult Social Care Next Stage Integration Project, in particular its recommendations, and agreed the findings for submission to the Executive;**
- (b) Subject to the Review being approved, the Executive’s response to the Review including an action plan should be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive had approved its response.**

72. TASK & FINISH REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING HOME FEES INCLUDING THE OPEN BOOK REVIEW (TO FOLLOW)

It was noted that as the consultation period for the Open Book Review had been extended, the report would be brought to the meeting of the Committee on the 6th December 2013.

73. FRAMEWORKI DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

The Committee noted a report on the Frameworki development plan for Children’s Wellbeing Directorate.

The Interim Head of Improvement reported that Frameworki was first implemented as an electronic record system in 2008. A governance structure was put in place to manage its development. In January 2013, these arrangements were reviewed and more robust arrangements have since been put in place within the financial resources available. Since January 2013, and taking on board the recommendations from Ofsted of the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children, a number of developments had taken place, including the design, testing, training and implementation

of a combined Contact and Referral process for the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the new 'Corius' reporting tool which would provide service and senior managers with a range of reports to effectively manage the service.

There were a number of areas that were still awaiting development. These included Single Assessment which, in line with the new Working Together Guidance, would replace the former Initial and Core Assessments. Social workers and managers were involved in the design and testing of these developments and were trained in the use of the system. However, due to recent staff turnover, it had been challenging to ensure all staff were supported to understand and work effectively and efficiently with new developments in the system.

In reply to a question, she went on to say that the service experience had encountered issues which would need to be resolved. Frameworki was one of the market leaders in this area and whilst the Council might have been behind in the development of the system, issues could be resolved with an upgrade.

The current configuration and support for Frameworki was not aligned with the Adult Social Care transformation programme, following which an assessment of the future needs of electronic record keeping systems would be undertaken. Deliveries of Adult Services improvements were dependent upon a fit for purpose infrastructure. Whilst progress was being made, this did pose a risk to the maintenance of robust systems.

In reply to a question, the Interim Head of Improvement said that the licence for the on-going system was £114k, and the upgrade would cost an additional £80k.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

74. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its Work Programme. The Chairman reported that as the intention was to move to bimonthly meetings, it would be increasingly important to ensure that the Work Programme reflected the issues that the Committee needed to address. The item would be raised up the Agenda for the next meeting and would be considered as the first item. In addition, it would be necessary for Members to become up to speed on issues addressed by the Committee, and they would be expected to spend more of their time outside meetings ensuring they were aware of these issues.

At the next meeting, Members would be expected to have identified three areas that they wanted to look at either individually or as a Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

CHAIRMAN