

# Minutes



## Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

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Date: 3 October 2017

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Williams (Chair), J Guy, K Thomas, J Watkins, T Watkins, C Townsend and J Cleverly

In Attendance: Councillors P Cockeram and G Giles (Cabinet Members)

J Harris (Strategic Director – People), M Rushworth (Head of Finance), C Humphrey (Head of Adult and Community Services), R Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), S Morgan (Interim Head of Education), K Davies (Team Manager – Operations Post Court), M Ryan (Service Manager – Safeguarding), E Mulligan (Interim Chief Democratic Services Officer).

Apologies: Councillors T Holyoake, L Lacey and H Thomas

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### 1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 September 2017**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2017 were confirmed as a true record.

### 3 **Improvement Plan 2016-18 Update - Quarter 1**

The lead officers were invited in turn to introduce each of the Improvement Objectives under their responsibility. Below is a summary of the questions and comments raised by the Committee under each objective.

#### **IP Objective 1: Improving independent living for older people**

- Officers confirmed that the 10 week target for Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments was a maximum, and changes in practice meant that many issues were now dealt with immediately, and the wait for home visits for more complex cases was currently up to four weeks. Members suggested that, if performance was currently well over target, there was scope for the target to be made more challenging.
- In relation to rolling out the integrated pathway for older people, Members asked how willing GPs had been to collaborate and share their data. Officers reported that partnership working with GPs was strengthening as the project continued, as they could see the positive results of the project in action.
- Members asked what was being done to engage GPs in the integrated pathway project. It was explained that the Health Board were working with GPs to bring more

practices into the scheme, and identify and contact those patients over 65 who could be registered with the scheme.

- In response to a question about the evaluation of the project, officers reported that this was planned for the Autumn, so would be started soon, and would include looking at the links between different preventative services. An event was being planned to evaluate how the different components work together and communicate, which would include talking to service users about their experiences.

### **IP Objective 2: Ensuring people have the right social services to meet their needs**

- Members questioned why the target was showing as 'amber'. Officers explained that an extremely challenging target had been set for Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOCs), and the reasons for missing this target were set out in the report. Performance had fallen slightly short of the target, but this was in the context of being one of the best performing authorities in Wales for this measure. The percentage impact of this was also amplified due to the small numbers of cases involved.

### **IP Objective 6 – Ensuring the best educational outcomes for children**

- In response to concerns that an overemphasis on attendance could detract from providing a well-rounded education to pupils, officers reassured members that schools were looked at on a case-by-case basis, with the authority providing bespoke support and advice to each school, and encouraging the sharing of best practice. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the wealth of research supporting the importance of attendance to pupils' educational achievement, with 2 weeks absence being equated to half a GCSE lost.
- In response to a question about the importance of parental support, officers outlined the different strategies in place to encourage parental engagement across all schools.
- Members asked for more information about the work to combat truancy. Officers outlined the respective roles of the school and support services, for example through the Educational Welfare Officers. Members were also informed of some of the initiatives in place in different schools, and the importance of communicating a consistent message, for example through newsletters, regular reporting of attendance figures, and reminders or letters home to parents.
- Members were pleased to hear of the good progress in promoting and setting up breakfast clubs, recognising the positive impact these can have on both attendance and pupil wellbeing.
- Officers provided an update on the support being provided to St Julian's School which was currently in special measures.
- Members questioned the rating of this measure as 'green' when one school was in special measures. Officers clarified that the rating was in relation to achievement of the improvement plan targets, and gave more information about the national categorisation system for schools and how support was tailored for each grouping. Officers described some of the complex reasons why a school's performance might decrease. Members also recognised the key role of the school's management team and governing body in supporting continuous improvement.

### **IP 8 – improving outcomes for youth justice**

- Members asked about the support for young people in the youth justice system who have specific conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder. Officers responded that

this was a multi-agency service, and the different partners worked together to put the right services in place for each individual. For example, officers described the speech and language therapy screenings and support being provided, which was showing positive progress.

- In response to concerns that there were limited options in place for restorative justice measures, officers described the range of projects currently on offer, and the joint working in place with different bodies across Gwent to find suitable placements, a process which was not always straightforward.
- In response to concerns that a recent 'bureau panel' had been cancelled, it was reported that a review was underway of this process, which was being considered on a pan-Gwent basis. Officers agreed to keep Members updated on the progress of this.
- Members reiterated concerns raised at the last Council meeting, regarding the involvement of young people in drugs, and the suggestion of a multi-agency conference to tackle this. It was confirmed that this suggestion was being referred to the Public Service Board for consideration.
- Members asked for more information about preventative work, for example picking up early signs of problems through working with schools. Officers confirmed that the YOS worked closely with schools, and new working practices had recently been put in place to be more proactive in this area.
- In response to concerns raised that a Headteacher should be in place in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), officers highlighted that the PRU was not a school, and the best practice approach across Wales was to operate with Centre Managers.
- In response to further questions about the performance of the PRU, it was agreed that further information be requested on this topic, and opportunities for a visit to the facility explored.

### **Resolved**

To refer the comments above to Cabinet.

To request that officers prepare further information on the structure and operation of the Pupil Referral Unit, and explore the opportunities for a site visit to the facility.

#### **4 Budget Revenue Monitoring (April to July 2017)**

The Head of Finance introduced the report on the revenue budget, explaining the overall position and the key areas of variance under the People Directorate.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- In relation to overspending on out of county placements for Children's Services, the Cabinet Member for Social Services highlighted the difficulties faced in predicting demand and budgeting for this area. It was confirmed that this was an issue experienced nationally, and the authority was working with partners to look at the potential for regional provision. Opportunities for invest-to-save projects were being investigated, to reduce costs but also to keep children close to home where possible, as this was in their best interests.

- In response to similar concerns over out of county placements in Education, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted the work being done to reduce spending and develop more local provision for educational placements.
- In response to questions, officers outlined the purpose and content of the seminar held recently with all head teachers and governing body chairs, to communicate the current budget position. It was reported that positive feedback had been received following the event.
- The Head of Finance responded to a question about the Council's reserves, outlining the current position and the allocation of the specific reserves in place.
- Members raised the issue of grant monies being made available to schools towards the end of the budgetary year, which made it difficult to plan effectively. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this was a concern being expressed across the region, and was being taken up through the EAS Joint Executive Group.
- It was confirmed that all secondary schools have a business manager in place, and opportunities were being explored to encourage primary schools to build up resilience by employing business managers on a cluster basis.
- Members suggested that the budget reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet would benefit from a simpler structure, and also a more regular reporting schedule, to ensure proper oversight and prompt action where needed.
- Members asked whether there was a general trend of increased spending in quarter 1. It was confirmed that this had been the case for the past few years. Members were informed that both forecasted and actual figures were reported on and forecasts profiled appropriately.
- The Head of Finance outlined the collection rates for council tax, and agreed to provide further detail on our performance against other authorities, and opportunities to learn from best practice in this area.

## 5 **Performance Analysis - Year End Summary**

The Head of People and Business Change introduced the report, which outlined Newport's performance against the national Public Accountability Measures (PAMs), and in comparison with other Welsh Local Authorities.

The Head of Service highlighted the context to these figures, which did not take into consideration the potential impacts of financial position, population demographics or service demands. Members were also asked to note the small margins between the different quartiles of performance. The report included the overall analysis for across all measures, and further detail on the performance of measures ranked nationally in Quartile 4.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- Members asked how the authority would ensure performance was improved on the Quartile 4 measures. The Head of Service highlighted the new performance management system currently being embedded, providing 'real time' data. A new performance management strategy was in the process of being agreed, introducing more challenge into the system – including reports being presented to Scrutiny Committees before Cabinet, as was happening here. The comments from this meeting would be fed back to Cabinet when they consider the report, so that scrutiny comments can be properly noted and acted upon as necessary.

**LCL/001(b): the number of visits to Public Libraries during the year, per 1,000 population**

- Officers reported that this partly related to an issue with the mechanism for counting visits, which was being investigated.

**EDU/015b: percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks, excluding exceptions**

- It was reported that performance had improved significantly this year and performance was now at 100%. Members were informed that this measure would not be included in the PAMs this year, but would remain as an internal measure.

**EDU/016a: percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools; and**

**EDU/002i: percentage of all pupils (including those in LA care) in any LA maintained school, aged 15 as at the preceding 31 August that leave compulsory education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification**

- Officers confirmed that the variances in performance in these measures were marginal, with very little difference between the top and bottom quartiles. For example, for EDU/016a there was one percentage point between the highest and lowest performing authorities.

**Resolved**

To refer the comments above to Cabinet.

**6 Forward Work Programme Update**

The forward work programme was approved.