

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, ADULTS AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee held in the Taunton Library Meeting Room, Paul Street, Taunton, TA1 3XZ, on Wednesday 6 November 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr H Prior-Sankey (Chair), Cllr P Clayton, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr A Govier, Cllr B Revans and Cllr A Bown

Other Members present: Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr T Munt, Cllr Bloomfield, Cllr D Ruddle

Apologies for absence: Cllr M Healey, Cllr G Verdon and junior Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Cllr G Fraschini

222 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no new declarations of Interest.

224 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 02 October 2019 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes were agreed with the addition of the following:-

- Concerns were raised with the issue of safety from the CQC reports
- The next report considered would include the scorecard usually included.

225 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

226 Proposal to write a letter of support regarding public consultation - acute mental health inpatient beds - Agenda Item 5

This item was not considered as a result of guidelines and restrictions on decision making and publicity during the pre-election period.

227 Mental Health Social Care Scrutiny Update - Agenda Item 6

The update was presented by Dave Partlow, Strategic Manager for Mental Health Social Care and Candy Worf, Senior Commissioner for Mental Health

The Committee was informed that the Adult Social Care (ASC) services that supported people with Mental Health needs was continuing to develop in line with the Council Promoting Independence strategy. The service continued to focus on the transformation to ensure that services were well aligned with other ASC services and that opportunities were maximised to promote the independence and mental well-being of the people of Somerset.

All ASC services had a vision which was promoting independence at every opportunity. Within Mental Health, this vision was often translated into the Recovery Model. The recovery model was a person-centered approach to mental health care. At its core is two premises:-

It is possible to recover from a mental health condition. The most effective recovery is person centred.

In Somerset, the strengths-based approach focused on the strengths of the individual, their family, social networks and communities. Also, central to the approach, is what mattered to individuals and their families. Empowering people to take control of their lives and their care and support, work with people and their communities to identify and provide sustainable local solutions to help them stay as well as possible and as resilient and as independent as possible, for as long as possible.

There had been a clear focus of Mental Health teams on promoting Independence and Recovery. However, transformational change was necessary to ensure that our Mental Health services could identify and work with people and families even earlier. More flexible and varied support aimed to prevent rather than respond. Mental Health services were now in a position where transformation could be escalated to develop the provision of Mental Health social care so that the service could better meet needs of the current population, respond to the changing needs and demographic with that great focus on prevention as well as providing services to those who need them, for example people with dementia.

- There was some discussion among committee members which included the following points: Mental Health referrals and single point of contact moving from children's to adults services was considered and requested to be added to the document. It was recognised that improvements could be made.
- Those with mental health needs were monitored to consider when mental health escalations were foreseeable, and contact could be made to provide help and support towards recovery.
- Providing reassurance and practical solutions with tiers of support was required, social workers were mental health trained but referrals could be made to mental health social work teams when additional support was required.
- Mental Health support social workers had been provided to A&E response call centre operatives. The majority of individuals with mental health issues were known to mental health social work teams, Village and Community agents were up to speed on dementia issues.

Mental Health transformation was monitored through the Transformation Board.

Officers were commended on the work undertaken and a positive piece of work. Members of the Committee were encouraged to visit the local workshops. Assistance to communities to find solutions to improve the quality of housing access was important in influencing mental health needs.

The Committee:-

1. Noted the progress against the transformation programme being monitored through the Adults Transformation Board and requested a further update in six months.
2. Supported the Mental health transformation plan.

228 Value for Money: Tracker and Social Care Experts Review 2018/19 - Agenda Item 7

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Resources Cllr Mandy Chilcott and Strategic Finance Manager Jason Vaughn to introduce the report. Members were informed the Audit Committee considered the Council's external auditors (Grant Thornton) value for money conclusion for 2018/19 at its meeting on 19 September 2019. In reaching the improved value for money conclusion for 2018/19, the external auditor sought additional assurance from social care experts from Grant Thornton, over the embeddedness of the arrangements in respect of sustainable resource deployment for adult and children's social care services.

The experts report was used by the auditor to inform their overall value for money conclusion and management actions had been incorporated into the new VFM tracker presented to the Audit Committee on 19 September 2019.

The report from Grant Thornton and the VFM tracker developed by the Council in response to the overall VFM conclusion were attached in Appendix A and B and determined how they might review progress during the year for the actions that were relevant to this Committee.

There was a section on Adults Services with some useful benchmarking comparisons. The overall vfm experts opinion for Adults Services concluded that there was a very low risk to the delivery of the MTFP for Adults services.

The review identified a few areas for further action in strengthening the council's financial resilience for adults and children's social care and management actions had been incorporated into the VFM tracker that was presented to the Audit Committee on 19 September 2019. Progress would be reported to each Audit Committee during 2019/20. A copy of the tracker was attached for consideration. There were two VFM actions being VFMY20011 and VFMY20012 that had specific actions relating to Adults Services which the Committee is asked to consider how they can best review progress against them during the year.

There was some discussion among members and the following points were raised:

- The VFM trackers VFMY20011 and VFMY20012 set out in Appendix B was considered along with how this could be monitored in future.

- Comparisons with benchmarking data was requested to include what good performance looks like and with comparison with neighbouring areas.
- There was positive news that demand had reduced by 59% compared to most parts of the country.
- As part of the transformation plan, councillors would be invited to go
- and see what good looks like throughout the service. Visits were important for councillors to consider the service in a different format.
- Progress would be considered in the New Year along with a list of suggestions for site visits.

The Committee considered and commented on the Grant Thornton experts report (Appendix A) alongside the VFM tracker (Appendix B) and determined how they might review progress during the year for the actions relevant to this Committee.

229 **Scrutiny Review Report - Agenda Item 8**

Scrutiny Manager Jamie Jackson introduced this item and highlighted the main points from this report. Member were reminded that effective scrutiny helped secure the efficient delivery of public services to drive improvements within the Council and, if done well, amongst other public service providers too. While scrutiny had matured in Somerset over the years, it still faced challenges.

As part of organisational transformation and taking forward Peer Challenge recommendations, the Council had undertaken a thorough review of its scrutiny function. The review considered best practice from other councils and the latest Government statutory guidance in May 2019. The review had also involved working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). Their covering report along with final review report (set out as Appendix A) provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider a series of recommendations and suggested any further developments they consider appropriate.

The majority of the recommendations in the report combined both the short-term improvements that could be taken forward from the CfPS report along with recognising that necessary cultural improvements were required to develop and embed better scrutiny form part of a longer-term programme of work commencing before the end of 2019 through until March 2021.

The Council undertakes an annual review of its democratic arrangements and its Constitution to ensure they remained fit for purpose for the organisation to meet its legal duties.

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee undertook an inquiry into the effectiveness of scrutiny in local government in 2017. The select committee's report identified a number of areas for improvement. This work has led to the development of the new statutory Scrutiny Guidance which was published in May 2019.

While Scrutiny had matured in Somerset over the last decade, it still faced challenges. This included officer driven agendas, scrutiny committees being used as a 'tick box' for agreeing new policy and not providing the committees

the opportunity to add value, limited member engagement, overcrowded agendas and work programmes.

The Peer Challenge in 2018 identified, as one of the key recommendations, that 'Somerset County Council should review its scrutiny arrangements as part of making it more effective, ensuring all councillors were equipped to play an active role and contribute to the policy making and key decisions affecting the future of Somerset's residents and the council, and that its governance arrangements are reflective of this.'

In parallel, as part of the organisational transformation work it was recognised there was a need to improve the Council's scrutiny arrangements. As a result the Council commissioned the nationally renowned Centre for Public Scrutiny to carry out an independent review of the scrutiny function at SCC between March and May 2019. This involved attending all 3 Scrutiny Committees (Place, Adults and Health and Children and Families) during April and conducting a Member survey, before producing an initial draft report in late May. This was subsequently reviewed with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs in June.

Following receipt of the draft Scrutiny Review report the Leader and the 3 Scrutiny Chairs agreed that the next step should involve an all member workshop to discuss the report, the recommendations within and consider these alongside the recently issued national guidance and the council's transformation work. The workshop was held in September, where members received an introductory briefing on the recently published statutory Scrutiny guidance for councils, an appraisal of the scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny resources at Devon County Council, provided a valuable opportunity for members to discuss the ideas and opportunities to make scrutiny more effective. The workshop provided the opportunity for members to discuss the Centre for Public Scrutiny's report and other ideas that members had for improving scrutiny prior to the report formally considered at all 3 Scrutiny Committees in November, as well as Cabinet, ahead of the recommendations being presented to Full Council in November.

One of the main areas of focus discussed by the Members present, was that the report was focusing on an ideal scenario for 'pure scrutiny' and did not necessarily completely reflect the reality of day to day Local Authority and Committee working styles and politics. There was also concern raised that the report was in parts generic and Members felt that what the Council adopts should be more Somerset specific.

The cultural work that had been identified would require a more gradual introduction, as members assumed more ownership with the work programme, actively suggest and pursue items they wished to be considered, as well as Cabinet and officers making greater use of utilising Scrutiny as a sounding board early in policy development and consider their recommendations when shaping decisions and focusing on outcomes. There would also be an emphasis of greater ownership and engagement by all Scrutiny Committee Members, as well as a depoliticising of Scrutiny where possible, for example removing the need for political group pre-meetings and replacing with pre-

meetings for all Committee members, to agree themes of questioning and specific areas of interest.

The cultural transformation required, improved work planning and policy advice support would require dedicated officer resources in addition to what the council provided through the Democratic Services Team. The Strategic Manager, Democratic Services has reviewed other councils and the CfPS recommendations and has identified, as a minimum, the need for an additional scrutiny support officer within the Democratic Services team. This additional officer resource and training resources for members were an integral part of the recommendations as they will be essential to support successful implementation by March 2021 and will have specific responsibility for policy research, liaison with members and officers throughout the Authority and scrutiny training and development.

The Committee then discussed a number of points including:

- Observations that had been made across three Scrutiny meetings was that there was already some progress on many of the recommendations from the CFPS. It was recognised that further work was required in relation to attendance and work programmes.
- Site visits were felt to be more interesting and informative as opposed to self-generating reports.
- It was acknowledged that generating public interest was an issue.
- Briefings could be issued on areas of interest to the committee to inform councillors on issues in between committee meetings.
- Members of the committee requested earlier consultation on policy development to encourage committee influence at an earlier stage ahead of Cabinet and decision-making meetings.
- Co-opted member involvement was considered as a potential opportunity and it was agreed to explore this further
- Involving other councils and public sector partners would provide greater opportunity for example a Joint Scrutiny Committee focused on Housing Provision and Health, involving other districts in the county
- Working with Dorset and Devon County Council on areas of mutual interest such as Climate Change and 5G could be pursued where there could be joint discussion on national topics.
- The Chair was in favour of informal meetings with the committee agreeing the priorities of the committee and additions to the work programme and add greater flexibility to how the scrutiny committee works.
- The Scrutiny manager would provide an update of the progress of the changes implemented

The Committee:

1. Endorsed and recommended to Full Council that the Council implements a programme of cultural transformation and improvements to its scrutiny arrangements by March 2021, including the provision of additional resources in

the Democratic Services Team and members training budgets to deliver the enhanced scrutiny arrangements;

2. Endorsed 10 of the 11 recommendations within the Centre for Public Scrutiny's 'Supporting governance, scrutiny and member support in Somerset County Council' report as detailed on pages 9 and 10 of Appendix A; The Committee agreed to an alteration to Recommendation 6 within the CfPS report and limit the number of agenda items to an absolute maximum of 4, rather than two as currently recommended, as this more accurately reflected the current position of the Authority and the size of the workload.

3. Considered and made further recommendations it considered appropriate to include as part of the Scrutiny Review with reference to the Government's new statutory guidance, best practice from other councils and the members workshop held in September 2019;

4. Supported all recommendations relating to the Scrutiny Review being recommended by Full Council at its next meeting and for the improvements to be taken forward from January 2020 to March 2021;

5. agreed there should be a quarterly progress report on the improvements and review of scrutiny arrangements.

230 Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions The following changes were made:-

- A Mental Health Social Care Update would be considered in six months.
- The Fit for my Future Programme Update would be considered in January due to guidelines and restrictions on decision making and publicity during the pre-election period.

231 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 10

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 11.42 am)

CHAIR