

Scrutiny Committee B

13th December 2017

Children's Scrutiny Group

Purpose of Report: Progress report

Since the meeting of Scrutiny Committee B on 12th October 2017 the following work has been undertaken:

27th October 2017 – Youth Services pre Cabinet scrutiny

The Group discussed the options regarding Youth Service redesign with the Head of Service and Portfolio Holder for Schools. The Group received assurance regarding a number of queries particularly in regard to the work undertaken with disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, the effects on staffing of the proposals, a breakdown of the savings proposed to demonstrate the proportion which related to building costs. Written scrutiny observations from the meeting were provided to Cabinet which considered the matter on the 7th November 2017. An extract from the Cabinet minutes follow:

1. **YOUTH SERVICE REDESIGN**

Cabinet considered a report on redesigning the Youth Service to deliver the £220k savings target for 2018/19. The proposal was meet the savings target through a mix of direct and contracted out services. The Portfolio Holder thanked the Scrutiny Working Group for their input into the report.

County Councillor Laurie-Parry spoke in support of the work carried out by the Youth Service.

RESOLVED:	Reason for Decision:
<i>To approve Option 1 as the approach to be pursued in managing and developing open access youth services in Powys.</i>	<i>To strengthen and develop the approach to open access youth provision whilst also meeting the challenges as set out in the MTFS.</i>

31st October 2017 – CSSIW Inspection of Children's Services

The Group received a presentation from the Interim Head of Service and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services outlining actions that had been taken since the County Council meeting to discuss the report.

The Group heard how the Improvement Board which had been set up by the authority was now at the behest of Welsh Government independent of the authority and would comprise of three WLGA representatives (an ex-Member, ex-Senior Officer and ex-Chief Executive) together with a representative from the Children's Commissioner's office.

The Improvement Board will meet monthly and will report to the Leader and to the Minister. The authority will be required to provide reports every 90 days to the CSSIW and Minister which will be prepared by the Portfolio Holder, Interim Head of Service and Interim Director.

An Improvement Manager and two assistants have been appointed. The Director of Social Services post has been advertised and the authority and Welsh Government have agreed that a Social Services Directorate will be established rather than the responsibility for social services falling within a larger Directorate.

The Improvement Plan was in preparation for submission to CSSIW by the 14th November. It was intended to submit a draft plan for assurance that all improvements identified had been covered.

Performance information was under preparation so individual teams can see their performance. Meeting statutory assessment timescales had improved from 47% in April to 72%. A target of 100% was unlikely to be achieved with 95% likely to be more realistic.

With regard to staff supervision the service is working on ensuring this is recorded on the HR system rather than just within the national system which is not set up to report on this measure.

The number of LAC had increased and currently stood at 204.

16th November 2017 – Improvement Plan and Performance Information

The group received a copy of the plan which had been submitted to CSSIW.

The group expressed concern that the plan only assigned responsibility for improvement to the Director of Social Services for one item and it was considered that this role held a far higher level of responsibility than currently defined.

The group noted that a number of staff responsible for improvements had been in post during the budget setting period earlier in the year when the risks to taking £2mill from the service had not be brought to the attention of Members. The group were given to understand that managers within the service had raised concerns but the Head of Service had not shared these concerns and thus such concerns had not fed through.

The group queried how assurance could be gained that the actions outlined in the report would actually be seen on the ground. Previous experience had shown there was a disconnect between the view of what should happen and what actually happened. It was noted that progress would be analysed externally from the CSSIW and WLGA but that the Improvement Plan outlined responsibility for each action and individual staff members would be accountable for such actions.

The group noted the importance of concentrating on making the improvements identified by the inspection report but also of understanding what had led to the current position to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. The opportunity for Members to consider proposed department restructures may be a chance for risks associated by such changes to be considered.

Progress against the immediate actions within the action plan was scrutinised with concerns raised regarding funding for the improvements. The group were advised that in the short term £4m had been made available and costs associated with the improvements was being coded to this sum. Funding for 2018/19 would form part of the budget proposals which were currently under discussion.

The group received a demonstration of the performance measures which will be available for all Members to view. Members of the group were provided with access to the measures which would be rolled out to Cabinet and all Members by the end of November. The scrutiny group will require additional performance information to undertake their scrutiny role.

The group considered the terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Group and made the following observations:

1. Change Strategic Director – People to Director of Social Services
2. The scrutiny group request that the observer status for scrutiny be changed to include the Chair, Vice-Chair and Lead Member of Children’s Scrutiny to act as Observers.
3. Quoracy – consider changing ‘three elected Members’ to ‘three Portfolio Holders’ to clarify that the elected member observers could not count towards a quorum.

Work Programme

14th December – 10.00am – Safeguarding

15th January 2018 – 2.00pm jointly with Adults Scrutiny – PPD

2nd May 2018 – 2.00pm jointly with Adults Scrutiny – Directors Report on Social Services

<p>Report contact: Liz Patterson, Scrutiny Officer Contact details: 01597 826980, elizabeth.patterson@powys.gov.uk Sources/background papers:</p>
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Membership:

County Councillors: **D Rowlands** (Lead Member)
A Jenner, J Gibson-Watt, D Jones, K Laurie-Parry, S. McNicholas and P Roberts,
County Councillor R Williams
Parent Governor Representatives Mrs A. Davies and Mrs S Davies