

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 12 November 2019

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Simon Bennett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

Employees

James Barlow	Senior Accounting Officer
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
David Watts	Director of Adult Services
Becky Wilkinson	Head of Adults Improvement
Dawn Williams	Head of Service Safeguarding

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:

Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Linda Leach – Cabinet Member for Adult
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded.
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting (16 October 2019)**
That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.
- 4 Matters arising**
Minute 5 – Adult Social Care Annual Report: The Local Account 2018-19

The panel queried the response to concerns about the lack of data about LGBT+ people in the report and the importance of including qualitative and quantitative data to show awareness and sensitivity to the issue. David Watts, Director of Adult

Services, responded that the service had considered the previous comments and referred to national guidance about what information should be included in the annual report. The Council is required nationally to try and collect data sexuality and gender of employees but there is no requirement to provide this information. The Director of Adult Services advised that the Council is following Government guidance which has set the 40 per cent response rate.

The panel commented that while a figure of 40 per cent survey return is considered to provide a statistically robust data, there was still value to be gained from analysing all survey responses and to include a reference to it in the annual report.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that following the previous discussion on the issue it has been agreed to make changes to the report and to proactively offer support to social workers to have a conversation about the issues. The work is being supported by Communications Team who are preparing promotional material.

The panel referred to a recent presentation by Dr Michael Brady (National Adviser for LGBT+ Health), who highlighted the importance of collecting and using data about the quality of services to LGBT+ community and the need to better understand the issues when commissioning services. The panel commented on the difficulties and challenges facing people wanting help or support and considered that more work was needed to encourage more people from the LGBT+ community to complete survey forms.

5 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-2021 to 2023-2024**

The Finance Business Partner (Corporate) presented the budget report and explained the changes made to the content in response to feedback during the consultation period. The Panel were invited to comment on the budget proposals relevant to its remit. The Panel were advised that comments on the proposals would be added to a report to be considered by Scrutiny Board before being presented to Cabinet.

The Finance Business Partner advised the Panel that an extra £6.2 million had been added to the adult social care budget to address budget pressures. The Director of Adult Services outlined the range of budget pressures and challenges that the service had faced, such as meeting the commitment to the National Living Wage, which had proven to be more difficult to achieve than originally expected.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the five core principles that supported the workstreams aimed at supporting the achievement of the priorities detailed in the Our Council Plan 2019-24, which related to adult social care. The Director of Adult Services added that he wanted to avoid following a 'salami slicing' approach to meeting savings targets and instead the focus had been on introducing different models for transforming the service. The changes were aimed at achieving a better balance between the quality of service offered and meeting budget savings targets. The following were given as examples, Transforming Adult Social Care Programme, the Better Care Programme and work done as part of Sustainable Transformation Programme (STP), which is a partnership of health and care services working across the Black Country.

The Panel were advised that the STP was looking at delivering more cost-effective joint commissioning of services, which sometimes were better done at a Black Country level rather than each authority providing their own local service, which could be difficult and also more costly due to the small numbers.

The Panel queried the lack of detail in the proposed restructure of the Commissioning Team and would have liked to have seen information about the current and proposed new structure to allow more informed comment. The Director of Adult Services advised that details about the changes to the structure were currently part of discussions with employees and trade unions, so he was not able to comment in a public meeting or provide more details in the report at the current stage. The Panel queried the expected impact on the service of meeting the savings target of £300,000 and whether this would involve the deletion of specific posts. The Director of Adult Services advised that no decision had been made yet and some of the savings could be achieved through the process of voluntary redundancies and the deletion of vacant posts to achieve the savings target.

The Panel queried the reference to the core principals and specifically the idea of unlocking capacity within communities to provide an effective and supportive environment. The Panel were concerned about the reduced capacity with the voluntary sector due to previous funding reductions and the extent to which this aim was achievable in the current circumstances. The Panel added that the number of community groups needed practical financial support ranging from getting help with venue and refreshments costs, to continue providing a service.

The Director of Adult Services advised that the majority of the adult services budget was spent on meeting statutory needs where people have been assessed under nationally set eligibility criteria. This presented a challenge to the Council in meeting those needs and demands for funding where there was no statutory responsibility. The Director of Adult Services accepted that the voluntary sector needed extra financial support and there was a commitment to work constructively, while continuing to manage budget pressures on the service.

The Panel discussed the proposals listed in the papers linked to aim of transforming adult social care. The Panel queried the options being considered as part of the review of Blakenhall dementia day service provision and expressed concern about reducing funding in this area. The Director of Adult Services advised the Panel that no detailed decisions had been made yet, but there were discussions ongoing to look at how current services were delivered.

The Panel were reassured that the savings proposals did not affect the provision of the day services at Blakenhall. A number of different models of best practice were being considered for the provision of meals. The Director of Adult Services advised that the final budget proposals would be presented to Cabinet on 19 February 2020. The Panel discussed the idea of considering the outline budget proposals presented at a future meeting when more detail would be available to assess them against Council's priorities and their likely impact on the service. The Director of Adult Services commented that the transformation programme was looking at different ways of supporting people, for example, supporting a person into employment as an alternative to visiting the local day centres. Many of the current adult care services

were based on ideas developed in the 1980s and as demand changed, the offer also needed to change.

The Panel queried current progress on completing a more detailed assessment of the equalities and health implications of the budget savings proposals. The Director of Adult Services advised that a full equalities impact assessment would need to be done. An initial assessment on the proposals had been done.

Resolved:

1. The Panel comments on the budget proposals to be included in the feedback to Scrutiny Board before it is presented to Cabinet.
2. The Panel agree that the Chair and Vice Chair approve the final response that is sent to Scrutiny Board.
3. The Panel agree to add to the work programme, reports on the budget proposals when further details became available to consider their impact and to make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

6 **Wolverhampton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (presentation to follow)**

Dawn Williams, Head of Safeguarding, gave a PowerPoint presentation on plans to abolish Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board and replace it with a new organisation Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together. The Head of Safeguarding advised the panel that this would be final time that the annual safeguarding board report would be presented in the format detailed in Agenda item. The Head of Safeguarding outlined the original aims behind the setting up of Safeguarding Boards. The Head of Safeguarding outlined the reasons highlighted during a review about the limited effectiveness and impact of the current structure and working arrangements. The Head of Safeguarding advised the panel that Children Safeguarding Boards were established in 2006 and Adults Safeguarding Boards in 2014. A key issue highlighted from a local review was that the current arrangements were considered to be too bureaucratic and that there was a lack of ownership of the issues and the delivery of priorities. As a result of new national guidance, a number of changes were required to be made to local safeguarding arrangements to improve their effectiveness. The Head of Safeguarding outlined the new structure and the aims of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together.

The Head of Safeguarding outlined the benefits of the new working arrangements. The change is considered to be positive and will create an environment which offers the right level of challenge to partner agencies and support the move to adopting a whole family approach to the issue of safeguarding. The plan is to have the new working arrangements fully embedded by the end of March 2020.

The Head of Safeguarding listed the members of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Integrated Executive Working Group. The Head of Safeguarding outlined the role and membership of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Integrated Scrutiny and Assurance Group. A key part of the role was to embed learning and support improvement in the effectiveness of the service. The panel discussed the safeguarding role of schools in supporting safeguarding agenda.

The Head of Safeguarding explained the reasons for removing the role of Independent Chair. A new Independent Scrutineer would be appointed at no cost and role would be very different. The expectation is that the person would commit to

10 – 12 days year to check on progress and to offer challenge about the progress towards achieving the priorities. An independently facilitated stakeholding event is being planned to review progress against key priorities. The scrutiny role of the independent scrutineer would be supported by case file audits, peer reviews and external partnerships to provide an independent review.

The panel queried the line of authority for safeguarding matters in the new structure. The Head of Safeguarding advised that findings and recommendations of the work of sub-groups would be reported to the Executive Group who have lead responsibility for safeguarding.

An issue of concern can be escalated to the Executive Group which is part of the changes introduced to support partner organisations to be more dynamic, flexible and responsive. The effectiveness of the work of the Executive Group would be appraised by the Independent Scrutineer.

The panel queried what would happen if the current arrangements don't deliver the expected improvements. The Head of Safeguarding advised that the progress would be reviewed by the Independent Scrutineer.

The new approach safeguarding is based on national learning from some of the early adopters and has involved taking the best from these examples to make changes to current arrangements in Wolverhampton. The progress will be reviewed at the end of March 2020 to look what further immediate changes are needed.

The panel queried if the changes would help to reduce the risk of silo working between different agencies. The panel queried if the new working arrangements would identify and address any example of silo working among the key agencies leading on safeguarding matters. The Head of Safeguarding offered the panel reassurance and added that an important part of the new approach is to continue to integrate both children's and adults safeguarding practice, supported by a much more simplified management structure.

The Director of Adult Services added that there is a lot of duplication in current partnership arrangements and the changes represent an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding provision. This would be supported by a reduction in the numbers of organisations involved at meetings and meetings themselves will also be reduced. The creation of dedicated working groups would add value.

The Head of Safeguarding commented on the impact of the new working arrangements on the financial contribution to the budget made by partner organisations as a result of a reduction of the number represented on the new executive board. The Council contributes the majority share to the budget, followed by the police and benefits from being co-terminus with the areas covered by partners such as the police and CCG. The situation is complicated in other areas who do not have this coterminous arrangement where changes in safeguarding structure could lead to requests for increased funding contributions from West Midlands Police in other areas without this arrangement, at a time when the police finances are under pressure.

The panel queried what the safeguarding situation would look like in 12 months' time from changes introduced. The Head of Safeguarding would expect to see more

challenge, better partnership working arrangements and improved relationships with the community.

The Head of Safeguarding advised that March 2021 would be a good time to report back to the panel progress against the key aims and priorities. The suggested that a briefing from the independent scrutineer would also be helpful. The panel agreed to add the item on Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together to the panel work programme.

Resolved:

1. The panel welcomed the report and supported the aims for Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together arrangements in Wolverhampton.
2. The panel to receive a progress report from a representative of the executive working group on the impact of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together in March 2021 in achieving its stated aims.
3. The panel to receive a briefing from the Independent Scrutineer on the effectiveness of the partnership in meeting its stated aims and priorities in March 2021.

7 Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2018/19 (for information)

The panel agreed to note the report.

8 Briefing on panel visit to Action for Independence (verbal report)

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, briefed the panel about the visit to Action 4 Independence in Wolverhampton on 5.11.19. The aim of the visit was to meet members of the social work team to talk about their experiences of supporting people with a diagnosis of dementia and also to get their views of using the '3 Conversations' approach. Cllr Moran briefed the panel on findings from the visit and overall view of the support offered. Cllr Moran commented that dementia presents a number of challenges to the social work teams as it not a condition that a person will be improve and their health will decline. The important value of using telecare to support families and a person with a diagnosis was highlighted. Cllr Moran supported the introduction of '3 Conversations' as the approach reflects best practice in social work. In discussion with social worker team the issue of managing caseloads of 30-40 was highlighted as a concern and the impact of picking up more cases when on duty. Furthermore, the pressure on front line staff working on complex cases added to already high stress levels. There was recognition by the panel of the need to support staff and for them to have access to support, and specialist clinical support. The Director of Social Worker accepted that the new ways of working presented a challenge to social work teams at this stage of the process and referred to his own experiences of working in social work team. The Director of Social Worker offered reassurance about casework management and explained that in the past caseload of 60 -70 cases were the norm, but it was important to note not all the cases would be active.

Cllr Bennett commented on issue of number of calls to City Direct which were directed to social work teams and expressed concern about the impact of delays in callers getting their issues resolved. The Director of Adult Services commented that this is new role for managers who in the past would have allocated cases. In the new arrangements social workers on duty have to be able to self-allocate which presents a challenge to them, but this does require social work team managers to understand

the issues facing duty staff and have discussions about work allocation. The panel were advised that social work teams are encouraged to meet informally through 'huddles' to talk about difficult cases which are causing them stress and to get advice and support.

The panel expressed concern about lack of awareness about welfare support offered from the Council experiencing work stress. The Director of Adult Services advised that while specialist clinical support is not available other forms of support are available. The support service is actively promoted, and managers should be aware of the process for making a referral. The Director of Adult Services advised that calls to the Council are referred directly to the appropriate teams to respond and the work being to reduce caller waiting times. The panel commented about whether social work staff should be able to access a qualified counsellors. The Director of Adult Social Care added that levels of staff turnover in adult social work teams are low. The level of staff turnover is always traditionally been much higher in children social work teams.

The panel praised the professionalism of social work team and wanted to formally record their thanks for making time available and willingness to share their experiences.

The Director of Adult Services welcomed the willingness of social work teams to share their views and the issue of managing the call duty system is an area that further work will be done in response to the issue highlighted during the visit.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

- 9 **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel 2019 20 - Draft Work Programme**
Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the draft programme for information and comment. The panel were advised the item on dementia scheduled for 28.1.2020 had been deleted from the work programme following a discussion. The work programme will be updated to reflect other possible topics that could be added as future items.

Resolved:

The panel accepted the change to the panel work programme.