

Minutes of the Adult Social Care Select Committee

Thursday 13th July, 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green
Road, Netherton

Present:

Councillor L Johnson (Chair)
Councillors R Collins, T Crumpton, A Davies, M Hanif, A Hopwood, P Lowe, and
A Qayyum.

Dudley MBC Officers:

M Bowsher (Director of Adult Social Care), D Phillipowsky (Head of Adult Mental
Health) (Directorate of Adult Social Care) and H Mills (Senior Democratic
Services Officer) (Directorate of Finance and Legal).

Also in attendance:

Councillor M Rogers (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care)
Councillors D Corfield and E Taylor (Invitees as Ward Members for Netherton,
Woodside and St Andrews)
J Griffiths – HealthWatch Dudley (Invitee)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors S Bothul, J Elliott and C Sullivan.

2 **Appointment of Substitute Member**

No substitute members were appointed for this meeting.

3 **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor T Crumpton, for transparency purposes, declared that his father-in-law resided in a Care Home which was funded by the Local Authority.

4 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

5 **Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24**

Members of the Committee considered the programme of meetings and potential items of business for the Adult Social Care Select Committee during 2023/24.

In referring to paragraph 9 of the report submitted, Councillor P Lowe, as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the reasons as to why the proposed consequential updates to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements were deferred. The importance in ensuring that the current call-in and scrutiny arrangements continued were emphasised, in that individual Select Committees, who had a specialised knowledge and experience, should be responsible for the scrutiny of any call-ins and budgetary implications relevant to their specific service area/directorate. It was recognised however that the scrutiny of Borough wide issues should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Director of Adult Social Care advised of a slight amendment to the programmed list of items as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report, in that the proposed agenda item in relation to Preparing for Adulthood was now suggested to be considered in January 2024, instead of March.

In referring to the proposed agenda item in relation Blue Badge Fraud, Members expressed concern in relation to the wording of the title. In response the Director of Adult Social Care advised that there were specific regulations for Blue Badges and misuse was defined as fraud. It was stressed that the report would not include any information to encourage fraudulent behaviour. Following deliberations, the title of the business item was suggested to be amended to Blue Badge Fraud, Process and Enforcement, to cover all aspects of the regulations.

Resolved

- (1) That the programme of meetings for 2023/24, be noted.
- (2) That subject to the comments referred to above, the business items as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, be noted and agreed.
- (3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be recommended to continue with the existing arrangements for call-in and that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report continue to be submitted to individual Select Committees for scrutiny.
- (4) That the Lead for Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all necessary arrangements to enable the Select Committee to undertake its work during the 2023/24 municipal year.
- (5) That subject to any necessary amendments, as a consequence of resolution 3, the draft terms of reference for the Select Committee, as set out in the appendix to the report, be noted.

6 Progress Update with the Woodside Day Service

A report of the Director of Adult Social Care was submitted to provide an update on the Woodside Mental Health Day Service Provision.

The Director of Adult Social Care outlined the current position and in doing so commented that due to a recent break-in at the premises and as a result of a collapsed ceiling and water damage within the condemned part of the building, the reopening of the centre may be delayed. The poor condition of the building was referred to and the Director of Adult Social Care expressed concern with regard to the viability, cost and long-term appropriateness of the building.

The Head of Adult Mental Health advised that risk assessments had been undertaken on the premises, which had resulted in part of the building being condemned. The ceiling in that part of the building had since collapsed causing further water damage and dampness, which consequently impacted upon the fire alarm system for the whole building. All electricity and gas had been disconnected from the unused part of the building, therefore it proved difficult to dry out the area, so that the fire alarm system could be reset. The cost of the remedial work that had already been spent was outlined and it was emphasised that ongoing significant sums of money would be required to continue to maintain a 'status quo' and that the building at Woodside was not sustainable in its current form.

The Head of Adult Mental Health stated that moving forward the day centre would provide a 12-week strengths-based approach programme in conjunction with outreach groups in the local community including NHS, Dudley Integrated Health Care Trust (DIHC), Black Country Health Care and Dudley College. The criteria and process of who could refer into the service was outlined and Members were informed that the programme was designed to be portable and promote recovery, without being reliant upon a building and could be run from any venue. The criteria for the service was consistent with the Care Act.

It was reported that an assessment of previous users of the group had been undertaken to ensure that they were still eligible to access the provision. Pre-Pandemic, Woodside Centre had approximately 150 registered users, however following a formal review of need in line with the Care Act and based on the preference of attendees, only 19 had been identified as being eligible to access the provision at this stage. 15 previous users still awaited a review.

Following the presentation, Councillor D Corfield referred to the discussions and recommendations agreed at the former Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee held on 10th October, 2023, where the former Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, in conjunction with the Director of Adult Social Care was recommended to seek a land valuation for the site and questioned whether this work had been undertaken. The Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that a land evaluation request had been submitted and committed to follow up the request with Corporate Landlord Services.

In responding to the concerns raised by Councillor D Corfield with regards to how the service was now portrayed, particularly as the previous provision had predominately been utilised by long-term users, and how this had impacted local residents and users, the Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that it was not the intention to diminish or dismiss the impact of mental health. The new arrangements were compliant with the Care Act and would provide preventative assistance. On-going support would be identified for individuals during their 12-week programme for them to use if required upon completion of the 12 week period. It was further commented that, whilst it was the desire for some of the previous users to return to the old Woodside format, quite a lot of former users wished to continue with their current arrangements.

Councillor E Taylor expressed concern with regards to the new criteria being used to assess service users and could not comprehend why a significant number of previous users were no longer eligible to attend. She expressed the concerns that had been communicated to her by service users, namely that they felt that they had lost all trust in the Local Authority; that the Local Authority was not listening to them and there was no care in system; they felt that they had been misled and not been told the truth and that they were being moved to become someone else's problem.

Councillor E Taylor further commented that if the existing building was no longer fit for purpose why had the provision not been relocated to an alternative venue within the vicinity to enable the same level of service that had previously been offered. Councillor E Taylor questioned the truth and accuracy of the information that had been provided by the Director of Adult Social Care and former Head of Adult Mental Health.

At this juncture the Director of Adult Social Care raised a point with the Chair. Whilst Councillor E Taylor had every right to challenge the re-opening of the service and criteria, it was not considered appropriate or professional to question the integrity and honesty of Officers. At the request of the Chair, Councillor E Taylor apologised for her remarks, although expressed a right to challenge the timescales taken to re-open the service and the new criteria.

The Director of Adult Social Care acknowledged that previous service users would feel anxious about the change, however alternative arrangements and support had been in place since the pandemic, although acknowledged not all users had taken up the offer of alternative support. It was also emphasised that the decision to retain the existing building had been a Cabinet level decision and that Officers from the outset had advised that the venue was not fit for purpose or sustainable.

The criteria used to assess service users had previously been shared with Members of the Committee and whilst it was recognised that some users had attended the provision for a significant length of time, the 12-week programme would allow for users to be assessed and for their individual needs to be identified and relevant next steps implemented.

Members were advised that it would be impossible for Woodside Day Centre to return to how it was formerly with the full range of woodwork activity, due to health and safety restrictions. However, a full range of activities had been adapted to ensure a best fit for what facilities were available. The programmed activities had previously been shared with the Committee.

In referring to why only 19 previous service users were now only eligible, the Director of Adult Social Care commented that service users' needs changed over time, as well as the demand for mental health support, therefore, to ensure all aspects of mental health were supported, the service also needed to change. Work would continue to rebuild relationships with service users, and he was confident that once the service was in operation the benefits of the new service would be evident.

In responding to questions and concerns raised by J Griffiths, in relation to the options available for long-term users, the Head of Adult Mental Health commented that the 12-week programme would provide measurable outcomes for individuals and would help identify their needs so that they could be signposted to a suitable service if required. It was commented that there were already facilities within the community that were similar to those previously offered at Woodside, therefore it was essential to work smartly with partner agencies to avoid duplication and to provide an holistic approach. A user may be re-referred to Woodside Day Centre at a later date should their needs change.

Following deliberations, the Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that a summary of the support that previous users were now receiving would be provided and suggested that it may be useful for the Committee to hear first-hand from users of the service following completion of their 12-week programme. It was recognised that the programme needed an opportunity to get established, and the matter should be revisited later in the municipal year.

Councillor P Lowe suggested that the Select Committee look at a whole system approach towards mental health to identify a long-term solution. It was stated that the Integrated Care Board could provide funding to support a fit for purpose solution should a genuine argument be demonstrated, that early intervention would result in less hospital admissions and other health benefits. It was recognised that the current Woodside building was not fit for long term use, and other areas within the same location should be explored.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care assured Members that the provision would reopen on 24th July, 2023, if safe to do so.

Councillor T Crumpton referred to the social community aspect that had developed over time at Woodside and the importance that this continued. It was suggested that a café environment could be established somewhere close to Woodside to help keep the companionship and to alleviate loneliness.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress in re-opening Woodside Mental Health Day Service as a recovery focused preventative service be noted.
 - (2) That the Head of Adult Mental Health to develop partnership working to further develop and enhance the preventative offer.
 - (3) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Select Committee, with consideration being given to ways of seeking service users' views on the service.
 - (4) That the Director of Adult Social Care pursue a land valuation for the current Woodside Day Centre site.
 - (5) That the Director of Adult Social Care provide a summary of the support currently provided to service users that are no longer eligible to attend Woodside Day Centre.
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7 **Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 4 (1st January – 31st March, 2023)**

Members considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care on the Quarter 4 Quarterly Performance report for the 2022/23 financial year covering the period 1st January to March 31st in accordance with the Council Plan.

During the presentation of the report, the Director of Adult Social Care advised that a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection was expected this year. An assurance exercise had been undertaken to help with outcomes for the CQC inspection and the details of that exercise would be reported to a future meeting of the Select Committee. The Director of Adult Social Care outlined the known key risk areas namely, sustainable care market and care homes and waiting lists. The assurance exercise had identified that the service was going in the right direction, but there were risks identified particularly with regards to the number of people waiting for a review and assessment, which was identified as an area of focus.

Arising from the presentation, Councillor P Lowe suggested that consideration be given to allocating a specific member to an identified risk to work with the relevant team to improve performance.

Resolved

That the Quarter 4 Adult Social Care Quarterly Performance report for the 2022/23 financial year covering the period 1st January to March 31st, be noted.

8 Questions under Council Procedure Rule 11.8

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

CHAIR