

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Tuesday, 1 March 2022 at 10.00 am at Cumbria House Carlisle

PRESENT:

Mr WJ Wearing (Chairman)

Mr P Dew
Mr KR Hamilton
Mr N Hughes
Mr J Lister

Ms C McCarron-Holmes
Mr W McEwan
Mr CP Turner
Mr M Wilson (Vice-Chair)

Also in Attendance:-

- | | | |
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| Ms T Boustead | - | Assistant Director - Workforce and Organisational Development |
| Ms S Curran | - | Organisational Development and Working Training Service Manager |
| Mrs L Davis | - | Democratic Services Officer |
| Ms A Graham | - | Service Centre Operations Manager |
| Mr S Higgins | - | Assistant Director - Customer and Community Services |
| Ms C Killeen | - | Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Manager |
| Ms A Madden | - | Manager - Operational Delivery |
| Mrs T Moran | - | Policy and Scrutiny Project Officer |

PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Members held a minute's silence for Councillor Val Tarbitt. The Chair outlined the work and commitment Councillor Tarbitt had shown to Scrutiny, highlighting her work for the county's children and young people and armed forces.

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Evans, Mr M Hawkins, Mrs H Carrick, Mr K Hitchen and Mr S Collins.

46 MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that Mrs H Carrick had replaced Mr S Haraldsen as a Board member and Mr K Hitchen had taken up the vacancy that had arose from the sad passing of Mrs V Tarbitt. It was further noted that Mr P Dew had been appointed as Chair of the SAB Children and Young People.

47 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

48 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item on the agenda.

49 MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes from the Scrutiny Management Board meetings held on 11 October and 24 November 2021 be agreed as true records and signed by the Chair.

50 CALL-IN ITEMS

The Chair advised that there were no call-in items for the Board to consider.

51 ABSENCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Members received a presentation from the Assistant Director – Workforce and Organisational Development highlighting that employee wellbeing and sickness absence remained a key priority for the council and members and emphasising the opportunities to integrate approaches to health and wellbeing. The Assistant Director recapped on the presentation that the Board received in September 2021 and gave an update on phase 1 interventions work. Members were informed of developments after a refreshed approach to performance data which had been tested since October 2021, supporting managers to be confident in their management approach to sickness absence. Very positive ownership and feedback had been received from the Corporate and Departmental Management Teams, which had improved insight in service leadership and accountability.

The Manager – Operational Delivery then gave an update on Absence Management. Members were informed of the increasing levels of sickness absence with 19.43 working days lost per full time equivalent in January 2022, with 15.43 working days lost per full time equivalent projected for the end of the financial year. It was noted that Covid sickness was not solely to blame but had certainly had an impact on January 2022 figures because of the Omicron wave and the lasting impacts of the pandemic. The Manager highlighted that uncertainty around Local Government Reform would also be likely to have an effect on sickness absence. It was noted that phase 1 outputs, received from primary academic input and secondary expertise, had now been triangulated, were reasonably consistent and had raised confidence in identifying and tackling root causes of absence.

The Organisational Development and Working Training Service Manager outlined targeted measures that were being put in place including help for managers to manage demands on their time, addressing the cultural aspect of absence and providing short drop-in sessions on sickness management. The Manager outlined

targeted work for instances of abuse that some members of the workforce received, staff such as social workers and civil enforcement officers.

The Assistant Director – Workforce and Organisational Development concluded the presentation by outlining the People Plan 2022/23 that had been developed and would be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The Manager – Operational Delivery agreed to discuss a different reporting style for a member with colour blindness outside the meeting and gave members an explanation of SITREP (Situation Reporting), the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status of each measure visually against target and the direction of travel arrows which showed the change in the measure since the last reporting period.

A member questioned whether police were involved in instances of staff abuse. The officers confirmed police involvement on some occasions. In answer to a member's questions, the officers explained RTW (Return to Work), outlined bespoke meeting protocol and highlighted work that was taking place to increase the skills and confidence of managers to deal with sickness absence and encourage early intervention. After being asked about the red RAG target measures, the officers confirmed that these were starting points for improvements.

A member raised a number of questions on what measures were in place for manager absence, would have liked to see links to the external work that had taken place and asked for assurance that managers and staff had appropriate understanding of the procedures put in place. The officers confirmed that it was imperative for manager/staff training, ensuring a person centric approach, and advised that the external work had informed the People Plan. Members heard and welcomed Mercer work, measures which celebrated staff success. It was recognised that early intervention and management capability to confidently manage sickness absence was imperative and work had taken place to achieve this.

A member felt that there was a need to include service delivery in the People Plan as there were obligations to fulfil and questioned the approach being taken to address sickness absence. The Assistant Director felt that both approaches were needed to encourage a safe and supported workforce.

A member highlighted the multi-agency work taking place in Barrow to address civil enforcement abuse. The Organisational Development and Working Training Service Manager welcomed this and informed members this was now being considered at a national level.

The officers were thanked for their informative presentation and it was agreed that a further report, together with case studies and comparatives with other organisations, be brought to the Board in September 2022.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) The report be noted;
- (2) A further report be brought to the Board in September 2022.

52 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

The Assistant Director – Customer and Community Services provided the Board with a presentation on delivering accessible and usable services for Adult Social Care (ASC).

The Assistant Director and Service Centre Manager outlined the transition of the three Single Point of Access (SPAs) Teams to the Service Centre and progression of key findings to enable consistency, continuous improvement and culture change of ASC. The key opportunities from this service, external triage and the outcome was explained to Board members. The officers gave an explanation of Netcall Digital Telephony, outlined the statistics of the netcall overview and highlighted the realised benefits. It was noted that the call abandon rate had reduced from 56% to 3%.

The Chair thanked the officers for progress to date. In answer to a member's question on whether the right information was being received by customers, the officers informed Board members that the Teams had good understanding of the work although worked in slightly different ways. Members noted that phase 2 of the transition would align their ways of working.

A member raised questions on the Netcall system, asking whether support and recording was in place to monitor abusive calls and if, following Local Government Reform (LGR), there would still be a shared service. The officers replied that the LGR workstream was looking at all options for LGR and currently, although Netcall had a recording system, it wasn't switched on. Discussion took place around rising living costs and ways to welfare which was incorporated in the service centre. The Assistant Director agreed to undertake a deep dive audit on the benefits to individuals.

Following requests, it was agreed that a session on the system be arranged for Board members. Members thanked the officers for progress to date and their very informative presentation.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a session on the system be arranged for Board members.

53 DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

Members received the draft Scrutiny Annual Report before submission to full Council in April. The draft Report had been circulated to all the Chairs of the Scrutiny Advisory Boards for comment.

It was agreed that an invitation be extended to the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board following questions raised on improvement in the 101 service, Community Police Support Officers and ASBO behaviour in Ulverston.

A member requested the Chair, as agreed at the full Council meeting in February, write to the Secretary of State in relation to the effectiveness of a Cabinet/Scrutiny system compared to a Committee system. The member also questioned the number of Task and Finish Groups and noted that the LGR Task and Finish Group was supporting Locality working. The Chair informed members that these decisions would be for the devolved administrations.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the Draft Scrutiny Annual report be agreed;
- (2) the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board agree the final version of the Scrutiny Annual Report before submission to Council in April.

54 SCOPE FOR HEALTH AND CARE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Members were asked to agree the draft scope, attached to the report, for a Joint Health and Adults Task and Finish Group to focus on the implications of the Health and Care Bill reforms on the integration of Health and Care across the systems in both North and South Cumbria. It was noted that this work would build on the previous Health and Adults Joint Advisory Group.

It was agreed that membership of the Task and Finish Group be limited to members of the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee and SAB Adults.

RESOLVED, that the draft scope for the Joint Health and Adults Task and Finish Group be approved.

55 SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Members received a report from the Senior Manager, Customer, Policy and Scrutiny providing an update from the Scrutiny Performance Working Group. The draft minutes from the Working Group's meeting in January 2022 were appended to the report.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

56 SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

(1) Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee

A report from the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee updated members of the specific items considered at the meeting held on 7 December. These included

impact of COVID 19 pandemic, access to GP and Pharmacy Services, Lancashire and South Cumbria Pathology Collaboration and Cumbria and Lancashire Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

(2) Scrutiny Advisory Board – Adults

Members were informed that the Board at their last meeting had considered the Adult Social Care Strategic position, Extra Care Housing Situation, and Safeguarding Adults at risk from abuse and neglect.

Members noted the next meeting was scheduled to take place in March 2022.

(3) Scrutiny Advisory Board – Children and Young People

The Chair's report included an update from the meeting of the Advisory Board's meeting that took place on 10 December. The Advisory Board had received reports and presentations on Progress to Tackling Child Exploitation, Progress Update on the SEND Written Statement of Action and Educational Attainment and Exam Results.

(4) Cumbria LEP Scrutiny Committee

Board members were informed that the LEP Scrutiny Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Board. The LEP Scrutiny Committee remained in contact with the Chief Executive and Chair of the LEP and developed an agenda for the next meeting on 16 March 2022. The agenda included the Rethink Programme, Levelling Up White Paper and the implications for the LEP and Re-purposing the Cumbria Infrastructure Fund.

(5) Scrutiny Advisory Board – Communities and Place

Members were advised that the Advisory Board had met in November 2021 and looked at Fire and Rescue Service Performance, Regulatory Services and the Independent Planning Review.

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 10 March and items currently planned for consideration were listed in the update report. Board members noted that the Chair had requested an item to be considered at a future meeting on Resilience following the recent storms.

(6) Cumbria Police and Crime Panel

A report was received from the Chair of the Panel advising members that the focus of the Panel's meeting in January 2022 had been on the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Council Tax precept proposal for 2022/23. The update also referred to the launch of a consultation by the PCC on options for transfer of fire and rescue service governance. The PCC had published a Business Case which assessed the options and identified a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria as a preferred option.

The Chairs' updates were noted.

57 SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD UPDATE REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report which provided an update on issues and developments that had occurred since the meeting of the Board in November 2021.

Members noted that the work programme, which was appended to the report, continued to focus on the policy and delivery and performance issues which were most important to local communities. The work programme also ensured that Council services were well-positioned for transition to the two new unitary authorities that were to be established and ensuring the closure of Cumbria County Council was carried out effectively and using Scrutiny Members' skills, knowledge and experience to inform the design and establishment of the new authorities.

A member expressed preference for Committee systems for the new authorities and highlighted a problem with the HIAMS system not identifying rural areas postcodes. It was agreed that the HIAMS issue be raised with the Chair of the SAB for Communities and Place. The member also requested an explanation of the title for item 14 – Independent Fostering Provision – on the Forward Plan and made a suggestion for a New Task and Finish Group on Improving Bus Services in Cumbria.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the range of activity report be noted;
- (2) the work programme presented in Appendix 1 be noted;
- (3) the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 March to 30 April 2022 be noted.

58 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Board will be held on 13 June 2022 at 10 am at County Offices, Kendal.

The Chair and members expressed their gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the Scrutiny Team.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm