

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at the Shire Hall, Gloucester.

Present	Cllr Cate Cody	Cllr Pam Tracey MBE
	Cllr Terry Hale	Cllr Susan Williams
	Cllr Stephen Hirst	Cllr Suzanne Williams
	Cllr Lisa Spivey (Vice-Chair)	Cllr David Drew

1. APOLOGIES

The following apologies were noted.

Cllr Stephan Fifield (Chair) – represented by Vice Chair, Cllr Lisa Spivey
Cllr Stephen Robinson – substituted by Cllr David Drew.

In the absence of Cllr Stephan Fifield, Vice Chair, Cllr Lisa Spivey, acted as Chair at the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 November 2022 and 24 January 2023 were confirmed and agreed as a correct record of the meetings.

4. PREPARATIONS FOR THE CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) ASSURANCE OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

4.1 Professor Sarah Scott, (Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities), and Emily White, (Director of Quality, Performance and Strategy, Adult Social Care), gave an update on the background and preparations for the introduction of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of local authorities and Integrated Care Systems on 1 April 2023.

4.2 To view the slide show presentation presented at the meeting please open the link [here](#).

4.3 Members noted the information and were advised to consider their individual roles and that of the committee in anticipation of a visit from the Care Quality Commission. It was reported that a visit could be imminent immediately following the launch date of 1 April 2023.

4.4 Although the CQC inspection approach was not unfamiliar to the council, it had been over a decade since the last inspection of Adult Social Care

- Services had been made and therefore important for officers and members to familiarise themselves with the regulatory process.
- 4.5 Members were advised how the CQC assurance process would be used as a lever to develop the council's strategic approach to improvement, prioritisation and transformation based on the following areas of focus: -
- 4.1.1 Data strategy
 - 4.1.2 Improvement strategy
 - 4.1.3 Applying a prioritisation approach for the council's transformation programme
 - 4.1.1 Development of a local account or annual report for adult social care
- 4.6 Presenting an overview of the timelines anticipated following the launch of the CQC assurance process, the committee was informed that, from 1 April 2023 the council would be reviewing data and documentary evidence from across all local authorities with a focus on care provision, integration and continuity and on assessing needs.
- 4.7 CQC intended to commence with a limited number of pilot assessments from April. These would be applied to up to 5 local authorities and take place between April and September 2023.
- 4.8 During the period September to December 2023, initial formal assessments of all local authorities would be undertaken as a starting point. The aim was to carry out up to 20 assessments during this period. Work was underway involving local authorities and others to consider the best way to publish the outcomes of the assessments.
- 4.9 Members were reassured that a reliable source of good evidence was available and that partnership arrangements were strong. The intention was for the new evidence gathering arrangement to build into the work going forward and not be a one-off procedure.
- 4.10 Risk management and quality assurance data would help identify any gaps and assist in the transformation of adult services. This and any recommendations from the CQC would aid the continuing improvement programme.
- 4.11 Responding to questions, the Director of Quality, Performance and Strategy, Adult Social Care, confirmed that links involved in the gathering of evidence and quality assurance plans drawn up by the council and the work of local health systems would be encouraged. It was explained that it was not a straightforward process to produce an overall plan but that it was a sensible approach to share information between the relevant organisations.
- 4.12 A member enquired into the investment/additional resources required to process the assurance work and was informed that preparations had been underway since March 2022. Whilst it had been necessary to invest in

- additional resources, including the creation of the Director of Quality, Performance and Strategy, (Adult Social Care), post, the investment was considered a worthwhile investment and an important contribution to the continuing improvement programme for the delivery of Adult Social Care Services. It was also considered a worthwhile investment in staff retention.
- 4.13 Clarifying the arrangements for the engagement with scrutiny members, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities, confirmed that the CQC would want to seek the views of members during the inspection process and proposed that a workshop might be a useful starting point for members to gain a better understanding of what was required. In addition, a series of documents would be produced to brief and feedback to members. The proposal was supported by the committee and agreed that Healthwatch Gloucestershire would also be pivotal to the engagement process. **Action by - Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities**
- 4.14 Enquiring when members would be able to consider the outcomes of the local assessments, it was explained that the assessment process was ongoing but that the scrutiny committee would have an opportunity to consider the information. Meetings with partner organisations were being held throughout April, the feedback of which would be shared with the committee as soon as it was available. **Action by - Director of Quality, Performance and Strategy, (Adult Social Care).**
- 4.15 One member referred to the importance of public perception and highlighted the need to engage with the public on the new arrangements for the assurance of Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire. Members also stressed the importance of showcasing some of the good work underway and publicising the relationship between the CQC inspection process and the transformation of services.
- 4.16 The committee noted the information and welcomed the proposal of a member workshop event, plus regular updates at future committee meetings. It was suggested that a workshop event be arranged after April and that potential dates during early May be circulated to members. **Action by - Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities.**

5. MOTION 908 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

- 5.1 At the Gloucestershire County Council meeting held on 9 November 2022, members considered Motion 908, (Violence Against Women and Girls). To view the discussion and the outcomes of the motion at the full council meeting, please refer to the link to the minutes of the meeting [here](#). One of the outcomes was a request that the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee investigate the work of the County Council in addressing the

concerns raised at the council meeting and to produce a report following a discussion at this meeting to present to Cabinet.

- 5.2 Claire Procter, Assistant Director of Prevention, Wellbeing and Communities, (Public Health and Communities), presented a report on the steps being taken by the County Council to end Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Gloucestershire. County Council lead officers for Domestic Abuse were also in attendance at the meeting. A representative from the Gloucestershire Constabulary attended the meeting on behalf of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, (OPCC), to respond to questions on the work of the OPCC in relation to this area. The slideshow presented at the meeting can be viewed at the link here.
- 5.3 The Government publication 'Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy' published in 2021 defines VAWG as 'acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls' including, but not limited to the following crimes and behaviour; 'rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'- based abuse, (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and 'honour' killings)', as well as offences committed online.
- 5.4 According to the latest statistics cited in the Government Strategy, nationally, 1 in 5 women are victims of sexual assault, (or attempted assault), in their lifetime, (5% of victims are men); over 27% of women have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 (14% of men); and 20% of women aged 16-74 have experienced stalking since the age of 16 (10% of men).
- 5.5 Local data for the period 2021/22 recorded 12,797 crimes, (reported to Gloucestershire Police), as VAWG, (a 44% increase from that reported in 2020/21); reports of domestic abuse accounted for 44% of all VAWG crimes recorded by Gloucestershire Police. 7670 domestic abuse crimes were recorded in 21/22 (a 42% increase from 20/21, reflecting a continued upward trend). In 2021/22, 1516 stalking crimes were recorded, (compared with 591 recorded in 20/21). Whilst the vast majority of stalking crimes were linked to domestic abuse; 2% of recorded stalking crimes classified as VAWG related to non-Domestic Abuse stalking. 1912 sexual offences were recorded in 2021/22, (a 39% increase from 20/21).
- 5.6 The local response to VAWG is shared between several lead organisations, including, but not limited to Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary and the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). It was noted that Gloucestershire Police had made VAWG a priority issue.

- 5.7 A number of multi-agency partnership groups also provide strategic oversight and co-ordination. These include: the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, (chaired by the Director of Public Health), the Sexual Violence Partnership Board, (chaired by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner); and Safer Gloucestershire, (chaired by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner).
- 5.8 Operational leadership is provided by several jointly funded roles, including a County Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Strategic Coordinator. The coordinator oversees the county Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process and is involved in the wider constabulary response to VAWG.
- 5.9 The council also commissions several core services, including the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS), which provides a comprehensive range of support to victims, including a helpdesk, group support, and support from specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs); the STREET service (Safe Teenage Relationships Education and Empowerment Team), who provide support to young people aged 13-19 years affected by DA, and Positive Relationships Gloucestershire, (PRG), a countywide service aimed at addressing the behaviours of perpetrators of domestic abuse through structured support programmes.
- 5.10 In terms of funding, the Council provides funding, (via the DLUHC Domestic Abuse Grant), to the women's refuge in Stroud, and to cover the support costs of victims of domestic abuse residing in safe accommodation.
- 5.11 Included in the motion to full council in November, members committed to seeking White Ribbon accreditation, a nationally recognised accreditation demonstrating an organisation's commitment to ending male violence against women. It was confirmed that officers were currently in the process of setting up a steering group to oversee the accreditation process as part of the corporate action plan.
- 5.12 The Assistant Director informed the committee that staff and members would have an opportunity to sign up to become White Ribbon Ambassadors, (men), or Champions (women), and that further updates would be provided to members as the programme progressed.
- 5.13 The Council Motion also included a commitment to provide an awareness session on VAWG to elected members. The Assistant Director advised that officers were currently working with the OPCC to plan a session. At the committee meeting members were encouraged to promote the session to other members. **Action by – Committee Members**
- 5.14 Members were also encouraged to their influence by taking an active role in supporting local work on ending violence against women and girls, (within their local communities).

- 5.15 A number of suggestions were put to members as activities they may like to consider to support their commitment : -
- 4.1.1 Actively promote national and local VAWG awareness raising campaigns, such as the international White Ribbon Day;
 - 4.1.2 Support the development of domestic abuse champion networks on a district level;
 - 4.1.3 Facilitate links between community groups and the new Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Consultation Officer to support their work;
 - 4.1.4 Link in with the work of the district led Community Safety Partnerships;
 - 4.1.5 Promote awareness of the FLARE application developed by Safer Gloucestershire, which enables women and girls to anonymously share their experiences of where and when they've felt unsafe. The information will help local agencies understand how and where women and girls feel unsafe in the county and take appropriate action.
- 5.16 Responding to the update, several members opposed some of the terminology relating to White Ribbon accreditation and strongly questioned the need to distinguish the roles of men and women by references to ambassadors (men) and champions (women). One member proposed replacing 'ambassador' and 'champion' with a joint description and suggested using the word 'advocate'. The committee was informed that, as a national programme, the terminology was inherited. Noting the concerns, it was suggested that the committee's objections be fed back to the campaign organisers at the charity and this was agreed. **Action by – Director of Public Health**
- 5.17 For more information on the respective roles of ambassador and champion, please refer to links to the charity organisation website below:-
- <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/>
- <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/ambassadors-champions>
- 5.18 Another concern shared by members was the terminology and graphics of promotional material being displayed at local railway stations by Crime Stoppers UK. It was agreed that a letter expressing the committees concern would be sent to Crime-stoppers UK. In the meantime, Cllr Carole Allaway-Martin, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care: Commissioning, agreed to contact Gloucestershire Police to enquire if something more immediate could be done. **Actions by - Assistant Director of Prevention, Wellbeing and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care: Commissioning.**
- 5.19 A local member from the Stroud District referred to the women's refuge in Stroud and reflected on the reduced number of places of refuges in

Gloucestershire. Enquiring if there were plans for additional refuges, the member linked his concerns to the importance of rehousing female inmates being discharged from HMP Eastwood Park.

- 5.20 Tina Hemingway from the Prevention Wellbeing and Communities Hub explained that, in response to changes to the needs and risks to victims in recent years, the council now commissioned accommodation based support using different models. A refuge was no longer considered the most appropriate model for women seeking support and was not always welcomed by the persons seeking help. In most cases, victims seeking help preferred to stay with their families in their own homes, with efforts directed at moving the perpetrator out of the home and away from the victim.
- 5.21 It was confirmed that work with housing partners was ongoing, and that the council hoped to increase the number of 'places of safety' for Gloucestershire from 12 to 36. Additional government funding of £1 million had been specifically invested in providing accommodation to victims of domestic abuse.
- 5.22 A link to the work of the Nelson Trust, (provided by County Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Strategic Coordinator after the meeting), illustrates the robust work being undertaken to support women leaving HMP Eastwood Park and the partnership working by the council with the Nelson Trust. The Nelson Trust is a key partner of the reducing re-offending board, (coordinated by the OPCC), and forms part of the local criminal justice board
- [HMP Eastwood Park - ONE Women's Centre - Nelson Trust](#)
- 5.23 Elaborating on ways in which the committee might take action to support this important area of work, the Director of Public Health and lead officers referred to the importance of prevention as a key priority approach and 'International Women's Day' on 8 March 2023 as a starting point for raising the profile of the 'tackling violence against women'.
- 5.24 Members welcomed the range of effort being invested in addressing the issue. It was agreed that a committee response would be produced in draft form and circulated to members before presentation to cabinet. **Action by - Assistant Director of Prevention, Wellbeing and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care: Commissioning**

6. PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

- 6.1 The committee received an update from the Director of Public Health. To view the information report circulated with the agenda, please refer to the link [here](#).
- 6.2 Responding to a question on obesity levels and clarification on whether the data indicated an increase or decrease, it was confirmed there had been an improvement in the past month and that the latest figures would be circulated after the meeting. **Action by – Director of Public Health**

- 6.3 One member enquired into recent media reports indicating a national shortage of pharmacists. It was confirmed there was a national shortage and that the issue was being considered as a priority. Delegated by NHS England to the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board on 1 April 2023, it was suggested the matter be referred to the Gloucestershire Health, Overview and Scrutiny Committee to include on the committee work plan. **Action by – Democratic Services**
- 6.4 Another member expressed concern about the negative impact of vaping on people's health and requested more information on what action was being considered to address the issue. It was agreed the Director of Public Health would circulate a link on the work being undertaken in this area after the meeting. **Action by – Director of Public Health**
- 6.5 Seeking clarification on budgetary matters, (adult social care), and the use of reserves, it was suggested an item be added to the committee work plan for consideration after the May Full Council annual general meeting. **Action by – Director of Public Health**

The report was noted.

7. ADULT SOCIAL CARE UPDATE

- 7.1 The Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities gave an update on the delivery of adult social care. To view the information report circulated with the agenda, please refer to the link [here](#).
- 7.2 Members received a full and detailed update on the extensive work being undertaken to secure a new provider for the community meals service from 1 April 2023. A range of options were being considered, involving the private and voluntary and community sectors, with an increased likelihood more than one provider would be required to offer community meals as part of the new contract.
- 7.3 It was explained that the service was a non-statutory service, for which many other local authorities had chosen not to recommission. The county council, however, wanted to continue the service, which was regarded as an important service due to the value it gave to supporting residents maintain their nutritional well-being and manage healthy lifestyles.
- 7.4 Responding to concerns about the continuation of the service and the impact on local communities, the Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities reassured members that the council was extremely committed to providing a hot meal service post 31 March 2023. This was, however, not without significant challenges due to the ongoing struggle of finding a provider and the decision by the current provider to withdraw its service.

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- 7.5 Members noted the information, including proposed options. It was agreed a worst case scenario would be for frozen meals to be delivered to people's homes and for someone to go into the home to reheat the meal.
- 7.6 The committee was assured everything possible was being done to retain the service. The council was aware of the impact the new arrangement would have on people with dementia and with mobility issues and hoped to provide an interim arrangement for a period of six months whilst trying to secure a more permanent arrangement for the long term.
- 7.7 The committee noted the information report and requested regular updates on the community meals contract. **Action by – Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities**

8. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE

- 8.1 The committee received a detailed overview of matters relating to the delivery of services within the portfolio of services covered by the Chief Fire Officer, (Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service), and within the remit of the Gloucestershire County Council Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, (Trading Standards, Civil Protection and Coroners Services).
- 8.2 To view the full report, please open the link [here](#)
- 8.3 Cllr Terry Hale noted the response from the Trading Standards Team on concerns relating to the welfare and risks associated with free roaming sheep in the Forest of Dean District. Cllr Hale also referred to the outcomes of a recent meeting with representatives from statutory organisations responsible for the welfare and safety of the sheep. Expressing his continued frustration, Cllr Hale urged the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to request the Trading Standards Team to reconsider what action it might be able to take to address the situation. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed to pursue the matter and report back to Cllr Hale. **Action by – Deputy Chief Fire Officer**
- 8.4 The report was noted

9. WORK PLAN

The work plan was noted with a suggestion that the following items be considered at the meeting on 16 May 2023: -

1. Gloucestershire Combatting Drug Partnership Update
2. Sexual Health Issues Briefing

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

CHAIRMAN

Meeting concluded at 12.30