

Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee 15.3.23.

Report by Michael Hanley.

1. Implementation Plan Update

Kathryn Griffiths (LGR Manager): 81% of the programme been completed. 1305 milestones completed. Appointment of chief officers is being done, staff allocation has been completed, council tax consultation, ICT (computer) contracts and new website done.

Post Vesting Day (beginning of WAF council) Activities: ICT disaggregation: social care management, payroll, election, education management system. Post day one activities will be monitored by the Transition Board. There will be Service Continuity arrangements for the two councils. Gaps and significant risks will be identified.

Will Clark (WC, LD): Asked about the ICT system.

KG: There will be testing after vesting day. The system will still be there.

J Battye (JB, LD): When does transition end?

KG: Some of it will be dealt within 2-3 months, others will take up to a year. The vast majority will be done within six months.

S Evans (SE, LD): Asked about ICT provision.

KG: That is going well now.

D Rathbone (DR, LD): Asked about the use of consultants and what has been learned.

KG: KPMG won the contract in 2021. The contract will finish soon. We will be working together to a closure report. We will be moving forward to develop our own transformation processes.

DR: How will we know about thus?

KG: A business case will be developed explaining why we need that resource (external consultant). Every time we think we need external input, we will need to do a business case. We are still working on what will that look like.

JB: Sometimes the need for consultants is about capacity (lack of specialised staff). We need to develop our own skills (so that we don't need these consultants).

DR: Will the learnings from this be fed through this committee?

JB: We have spent £10.5 million. Are we on track?

Pam Dukes (PD, officer): The resources will be carried over.

V Hughes (VH, LD): When will we review the further transition?

D Stephens (DS, Scrutiny Adviser): It will be reviewed by the new corporate scrutiny committee. I would suggest it be a recurring item.

2. Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Reflective Review

Liz Curtis (LC, Senior Manager, Childrens Services): Discussed Childrens Social Services. With Fostering, Adoption and Residential Care, the host will be Cumberland Council. Foster carers will be recruited. The service supports foster carers (220 households), Regulation 24 carers (40 households), Homestay households (23) and Special Guardians (276 households). There are 40 FTE (full time equivalent) staff. Budget: £12.5 million. We have approved 15 adopter households since April 22, 18 prospective adopters in assessment. 16 children with a plan of adoption but no placement. 28 children with a placement order. We are supporting 78 families through individual adoption support and 44 families pre-adoption. Staff: 27 FTE, budget: £3.9 million. There are six residential care homes, four in Barrow. Most are rated good. Age range: 8-18. Staff: 79 FTE. Budget: £5 million. There is quarterly performance reporting: audit, compliments, complaints and feedback.

Bill McEwan (BM, LD): Asked whether the service will be ready post the first of April.

LC: We will be recording on two different systems.

JB: Concerned that our most vulnerable children will get the best placements for them.

LC: We will have agreements in place between the two authorities. We will never be able to find all the placements internally. If we can't find an internal place we go to our external team. We have a long term governance panel who judge these placements.

SE: One thing that upsets our children is constant changes in social workers. A few will have to have a change in social worker due to LGR. This has to be explained to them. I would like us to be able to provide more accommodation in Cumbria. I hope the new authority will grasp this nettle, the savings in the long run will be great and it is much better for the child.

BM: With the split we don't want children to fall through the gap.

3. Scrutiny Overview Report

Commissioning Officer: We have had all the services from the district councils and the county council to go through, an awful lot. We have reviewed all the contracts. Some are ending on the 31st of March. For the majority we will be recommissioning them (same provider). Some have a year to go. With them we will be restarting the recommissioning process.

BM: Last year some carers contacted us, worried about what was going to happen.

Officer: It takes time to work through the process which is compounded by LGR. I am glad we have now made awards (of contracts) particularly to small and local providers.

JB: Are there some long term contracts? (Alluded to to the difficulty of getting out of these contracts if you want to recommission them).

Officer: We will be concentrating on the short term contracts where we can give to an alternative provider and deal with the longer term contracts down the line.

There was further discussion about legal agreements, coroners service, waste collection and disposal. With regard to waste management (excluding collection), Cumberland Council will be the contractor taking over from the County Council. There will be a inter-authority agreement. Cumbria Holdings currently manages waste (Urbaser collects waste in the EDC area).

PD: Cumberland will provide the coroners service. Carer services will be difficult to separate on day one (such as adoption and fostering). The Inter-authority Agreement sets out responsibilities and flows of money to and fro and a timeline for further disaggregation and arbitration.

WC: Asked about arbitration.

PD: The only one that might end up in arbitration will be Highways. The Waste (disposal) contract is owned by Cumberland Council and they have a 25 year contract with Renewi (a UK/Dutch/ Belgian waste management company with a 1.7 billion Euro annual turnover in 2019). We have established a payment mechanism for cash flow. There will be a huge amount of monitoring. There will be a separate contract for waste collection.

VH: How will be worked out how much we pay Cumberland?

PD: It will be based on the cost of the service.

M Hanley (MH, LD): Asked how will the waste, especially the plastics, be disposed. Will it be recycled, burned or sent to third world countries?

PD: There will be subcontractors, you can ask them to come to the committee (scrutiny) to discuss this.

H Hodgson (HH, LD): If we recycle more, do we get that income back?

PD: Yes, that would happen. Cumberland will host the Coroner's Service with 45% of the cost paid by WAFC. With the Fire Service, driver training will be provided by WAFC.

JB: Asked about the Police and Fire Service charges (portion of council tax). We have no power to control these.

PD: Fire Service charges were added into the precept this year. With regard to Cumbria Holdings,

there will be 50/50 ownership. There will be a shareholder agreement and there will be two officers from each authority on the board.

This was the last meeting of this committee. Chair, Beverley Morgan praised the members of the committee for their hard work and diligence and hoped that the same people would take part in future scrutiny committees after vesting day.