

Audit Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019

Present:

Councillor Ahmed Ali - In the Chair
Councillors Clay, Lanchbury, Russell, Stanton and Watson

Independent Co-opted member: Dr S Downs

Also Present:

Councillor Craig Executive Member Adult Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Bridges Executive Member Children and Schools
Stephen Nixon, Mazars

Apologies: Dr D Barker (Co-opted member)

AC/19/59 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2019 as a correct record.

AC/19/60 Transitions – Children’s to Adult Services

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services and the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided Members with an assurance update on the progress made in responding to outstanding issues arising from the Internal Audit report on the Transition Service.

The Executive Member - Adult Health and Wellbeing and the Executive Member - Children and Schools attended the meeting and addressed the Committee. Also present at the meeting were Tracy Cullen - Assistant Director Adult Services and Julie Hicklin Special Educational Disability Lead – Children’s Services.

The report explained that two of the five recommendations agreed had been implemented and provided progress on the three remaining recommendations. The remaining recommendations related to:

- The development of a transitions strategy;
- The implementation of a plan within six months for the delivery of the revised transitions offer in line with the agreed strategy and vision.
- The introduction of Key Performance Indicators to support day to day performance management.

The chair invited questions from the Committee.

A member referred to the revised framework and asked where young people with a disability, requiring support and in the process of transition to adult services, fit within the current framework. Officers were also asked to respond to the reference made in the consultation feedback regarding the Transition Team being seen as the "Mental Capacity Act assessment team".

It was reported that the Transition Board had been reconfigured and now included representation from across service providers and the Parent/Carer Forum. The Transition Board will discuss 'Transition' as a themed approach to the issue for the reason that it was recognised that there is not a clear point of transition from children to adult services and work was required to co-ordinate the various services concerned in order to address policy processes and practices. It was reported that the consultation feedback received referred to the Mental Capacity Act, as it applies to young people as they approach 16 years old and the need for Children's Services and Adult Services to work together in supporting young people on decisions to be made about their future during the process of transition.

The Executive Members (Adult Health and Wellbeing) and (Children and Schools) informed that a meeting that Manchester Health and Care Commissioning Board had already considered the theme of Transition across related services and this will help to inform the Transition Board when it discusses the theme.

A member referred to the period of time between the audit recommendations in 2018 and the target date of completion in 2020 and asked what arrangements had put in place for young people in the process of transition to adult services. Reference was also made to the introduction of Liquid Logic in July 2019 and officers were asked if all children's details had been migrated onto the new system and how this is maintained.

The Executive Member - Adult Health and Wellbeing gave an assurance that the outstanding recommendations would be completed by February 2020. The point was made that the recommendations related to strategic planning, a draft transition policy and a transitional training plan as part of the development of a strategic overview for the service. The transition and care arrangements of young people in transition had not been affected and every young person had received a service and has access to support during this period. The Committee was also informed that details of children in a category of "known to Social Care" had been moved onto Liquid Logic system. The migration of children from the education database had started as part of a seventy-week work process and would include children with an Education Health Care Plan or a disability.

The Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management reported that a position statement on the outstanding recommendations would be provided to the Committee in February and would be referred to again within the Annual Opinion to be submitted to the Committee in March 2020.

The Chair noted the work that has been undertaken and yet to be completed to achieve clear outcomes. In noting the assurance given through the report the Committee thanked The Executive Members and officers for the information provided and responses to questions.

Decision

To note the report and the comments received.

AC/19/61 Adult Social Care – Improvement Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Adult Social Services which provided an overview of current work to improve the core delivery of adult social care services through improvements in process, systems, practice and culture.

The report provided an update on work to integrate adult social care into Manchester Local Care Organisation, including the mobilisation of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

The committee had previously considered a report in October 2019 and a diagnostic piece of work was undertaken that identified challenges on Adult Services such as:

- An increase in in safeguarding enquiries;
- Increase in deprivation of liberty safeguards referrals;
- Challenges in maintaining low lists for assessments and reviews.

The chair invited questions from the Committee.

A member asked officers if they considered the targets set had been over ambitious, in view that some were not going to be delivered on target and the degree of priority given to the targets by those officers responding to the findings. Officers were also asked to give an update on the progress of the implementation of the improvement plan.

The Executive Director - Adult Social Services stated that the input of internal audit is valued as a means to improving services. The aim of the service is to improve at pace however, this is being done in competition with other challenges on the service, such as the integration agenda, staff recruitment and other significant key pieces of work arising during this period.

The Executive Member - Adult Health and Wellbeing referred to the improvement plan and explained that in the process of delivering the plan there had been a series of challenges such as a significant rise on service demand impacting on staff caseloads and other issues that required action to be taken at once. The improvement plan has helped to deal with those unanticipated issues but has also ensured the safe delivery of services to Manchester residents.

Decision

To note the report submitted and the comments made.

AC/19/62 Adult Services Outstanding Audit Recommendations

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Internal Audit and the Executive Director of Adult Social Services. The report provided an overview of the ongoing programme of improvement work for the Audit Committee, in particular to highlight that work to respond to risks confirmed through internal audits undertaken in recent years and now forms part of a wider programme.

The chair invited questions from the Committee.

A member referred to the setup of performance metrics to monitor performance during the implementation of the action plan, to be agreed with GM Mental Health Trust Management (GMMH), and questioned officers on the use of metrics and the length of time monitoring has taken place. Officers were also asked what metrics are in place to measure success in respect of the work on transitions and what percentage of managers had completed supervision training.

It was reported that GMMH have been providing a service for almost two years however, statutory governance monitoring has been provided through Manchester Health and Care Commissioning. The purpose of the recommendation was to dig deeper as part of the Council's statutory duties under the Care Act and its delivery and to work closer with GMMH. In addition, it was reported that the Assistant Director Adult Services acts as link to the GMMH and provides support to the professional lead. The Executive Director Adult Social Services undertook to circulate to members of the committee, for information, performances metrics in respect of GMMH and Transition work and details on the uptake of supervision training by managers.

The Committee discussed the writing and contents of audit reports and, in particular, the language used to present of information. The point acknowledged that phrasing used within reports could sometimes be difficult put into context if the reader was not directly involved with an issue.

Decisions

1. To note the report and the comments made.
2. To circulate to members of the committee, for information, details of performance metrics in respect of Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust to identify measures of success and information on the take up and completion of supervisory training by mangers.
3. To note the comments made regarding the phrasing used within the executive summaries or audit reports.
4. To request an update to be provided to members of the committee on the completion date in respect of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) recommendations.

AC/19/63 External Audit - Update

The Committee heard from Stephen Nixon, Mazars the Council's External Auditors.

The committee was informed that the Audit Plan will be submitted to the next meeting.

Decision

To note the report.

AC/19/64 Draft Code of Governance

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which presented a revised draft Code of Corporate Governance. The revised Code of Governance will be submitted to the meeting of Council on 27 January 2020.

The chair invited questions from the Committee.

Reference was made the process of engagement with the public and how this takes place. Officers were asked for evidence of community engagement through ward co-ordination and its effectiveness which varied across the city in terms of the role of elected members and the support/development/training they receive in comparison to officers which should be reflected in the Annual Governance Statement.

It was reported that the process of engagement will be spread across the Council and this will set out within the Annual Governance Statement. The process of consultation and how it could be improved had been considered at a scrutiny meeting. The engagement of communities through ward co-ordination does take place but work was needed to assess how effect this is. The point raised on member training and support was noted and would be taken up through member services. In addition, the Equality Team would be contacted regarding the inclusion of staff and elected members to better reflect diversity of those people contacted for engagement purposes and to address the wording used in the Code, in light of the comments received.

Decision/s

1. To note the report submitted.
2. To note the comments made in respect of:
 - The wording of the Code of Governance document
 - Elected member training and support arrangements
 - The inclusion of staff and elected members to reflect diversity of the city to improve the level of effective engagement.
3. To recommend to Council that the revised Code of Corporate Governance be incorporated into the Council's Constitution, subject to the comments received.

AC/19/65 Annual Audit Plan – Horizon Scanning Report

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Audit and Risk Management which set out areas of potential risk and focus for 2020/21 and future years' internal audit planning. The Committee also received a presentation that set out the context of the plan and identified potential areas of future risk within each area of council service.

The chair invited questions from the Committee.

In noting the areas of risk across the Council's directorates, members referred to the resources available to undertake audit work and underlined the importance of focusing on areas that have most impact on the public in particular prioritising the welfare of people before other areas of services that are not frontline. Officers were referred to the issue of risk management and were requested to define what internal audit perceive as being a key risk. The point was also made that the lists shown in the report could be considered as being prioritised.

The Committee was informed that frontline services to residents is at the forefront of the audit plan, although it is necessary to balance this across areas such as the needs of residents, welfare and statutory requirements. Therefore, the audit of key systems of control, are in place to oversee these to ensure their governance is robust and working effectively. Members were informed that the lists in the report were not prioritised or in any order. The Corporate Risk Register will be refreshed and will be submitted to Audit Committee on 11 February 2020. The Annual Audit Plan will be submitted the following month and will include topics from the Risk Register as well as other issues.

A member referred to future changes in areas such as IT and new technology and officers were asked what preparations are in place to ensure there are resources with the right knowledge skills mix to meet new challenges.

The Committee was informed that investment is being made into increasing skills capacity in areas including data information systems, ICT and data analytics to identify patterns and improve efficiency. Staff training is in place to increase in-house skills and knowledge to meet new challenges. IT and new technology is recognised as a key growth area for audit and in some cases it may be necessary to procure external expertise when a particular skill mix is not available internally.

Members referred to the non-completion of the previous audit plans due to a lack of resources and asked officers how many staff vacancies are in Internal Audit and what preparations were in place to fill them. Also officers were asked if there are any areas that have not been identified as a priority that should be.

It was reported that there are currently three vacancies and interest is being sought to fill the vacancies, however the staffing arrangements may change and temporary resources may be brought in to ensure the audit work plan is achieved. A service review is ongoing and this will provide an assurance that resources will be available over the year to fulfil work demands.

In response to the issue of audit planning for the unknown, it was reported that essential areas such as statutory roles are monitored through key processes and

systems to identify changes or the emergence of patterns. Changes in systems could include overspends or a rise in the number of complaints received in an area of service as well as intelligence gathered from internal and external sources.

A member referred to the role of audit teams from other GM Authorities and asked if consideration had been given to individual authorities leading or specialising in a particular area or skill set.

It was reported that discussion has taken place with the other GM Authorities to co-ordinate working in collaboration and the sharing of resources for pieces of work. This collaborative approach is already taking place with audit work and audit colleagues in the health service.

Decision

To note the report and the comments received.

AC/19/66 The Committee's Work Programme

Decisions

1. To note the Work Programme.
2. To note that the meeting of the Committee on 14 January 2020 has been cancelled.