

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 11 October 2012 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Brian Blakeley (Chair), Joan Butterfield, Ann Davies, Meirick Davies, Pat Jones, Margaret McCarroll, Dewi Owens and Huw Williams

Observers : Councillor Martyn Holland and Councillor Gwyneth Kensler

ALSO PRESENT

Joint Head of Highways & Infrastructure (SD); Corporate Director: Customers (HW); Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (RM); Regional Project Manager (DE)(Conwy County Borough Council); Democratic Services Officer (RAH); Democratic Services Manager (SP); and Committee Administrator (SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alice Jones, Merfyn Parry and Bill Tasker

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Huw Williams raised an issue regarding an article in The Times newspaper which published a list of the top Universities within the UK. He raised the issue as "Review of Higher Education in North East Wales" had been an item at a previous meeting. At the meeting the Vice Chancellor of Glyndwr University, Professor Mike Scott had attended and had given a presentation. The figures listed within The Times positioned Glyndwr University 108th on the list.

The Corporate Director: Customers (CD:C) confirmed he would analyse the figures and would then write to Professor Mike Scott regarding the article. Upon receipt of a response, CD:C confirmed he would report back to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

4 CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE COLLABORATION

The Corporate Director: Customers (CD:C) presented a report (previously circulated) for consideration of the recommendations of the Conwy and Denbighshire Highways and Infrastructure Collaboration Programme Board following the consideration of the "*Conwy CBC and Denbighshire CC Joint*

Highways and Infrastructure Fully Integrated Service: Report on the Draft Service Design (September 2012) on the 12th September, 2012.

CD:C introduced the Regional Project Manager (RPM), Danielle Edwards, from Conwy County Borough Council who had produced the report attached to the papers Appendix 1.

The Conwy and Denbighshire Highways collaboration had been in existence for 3 years. Conwy and Denbighshire established a Collaboration Board and it had been their decision to evaluate the plan ahead. The Collaboration Board had met with Lead Members, Officers and the Chief Executive to look at the future of the project and evaluate whether there was merit for fully integrating services. The conclusion was that full integration would not be the way forward, but that did not mean collaboration should not take place.

The Collaboration Board made the decision that a report would be sent to Conwy and Denbighshire Cabinet on 23rd October respectively and to bring the report to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting today and to Conwy Scrutiny on the 16 October. The report was also to be brought back to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee following the above meetings.

The RPM summarised the main priorities. The Collaboration Board felt the Full Business Case (FBC) was not a viable case. How services would be staffed had been assessed, and whether more or fewer staff would be required. That had been one aspect of the project. Once it was clear how services would be delivered, the next question would be where were the services to be located? The three options were:-

- Option 1 – Relocation of Heath based staff to the Caledfryn site
- Option 2 – Retain Caledfryn and the Heath sites, re-organising the staff according to service/ sub-service areas where appropriate
- Option 3 – Staff from the Heath and Caledfryn to be located in a building formerly used as office space in St. Asaph Business Park.

Transferring staff to the Heath site in Llanfairfechan would not be a viable option as the Heath site was not suitable.

There would be ICT implications moving staff and location.

Section 10 of the report referred to the financial model, which showed prospective costs for the 3 options.

Following discussion by the Committee, various queries were put forward and responded to as follows:-

- The RPM confirmed disturbance costs had not yet been calculated as this would involve a significant piece of work
- The RPM clarified that within the report it should state “removing posts” rather than “removing staff”. With regards to the impact on staff, the Conwy and Denbighshire staff had been profiled. To enable savings to be made,

there would need to be redundancies. There were to be 9 new posts created. These new posts had been matched to current positions so reducing redundancies to 8.59 FTE (full time employment). Throughout the process, consultation with the Unions had taken place.

- Regarding accommodation, it was not conclusive any of the accommodation options would meet the criteria set.
- Confirmation that the Risk Register was updated bi-monthly and was to be updated following the meeting.

CD:C explained again to the Members to make it clear that full integration within the two Local Authorities was not financially viable but that collaboration could still take place. Full integration would not benefit residents with value for money. Internal collaboration was being assessed e.g. highways department collaborating with environment department.

The Joint Head of Highways and Infrastructure (JHHI) had been appointed in January 2009 to work on collaboration. A considerable amount of work had taken place throughout the previous 3 years examples of which were:-

- Collectively working on gritting routes had enabled a reduction in gritting vehicles from 23 to 21
- There were combined contracts for maintenance and
- A shared licensing system in the Maritime Services.

Collaboration between Local Authorities was not a statutory requirement but there had been clear direction from the Welsh Government that the cost of 22 Local Authorities within Wales working in isolation would be too high, and that collaboration, wherever possible, was necessary to reduce costs.

CD:C explained the Conwy and Denbighshire Highways and Infrastructure Collaboration Programme Board recommendations:-

- Recommendation 3.1 was set out within the report as the Business Case did not make a clear case for a fully integrated Highways and Infrastructure service. Conwy and Denbighshire do not proceed with this option.
- Recommendation 3.2 continued to look at how the project could move forward, not with full integration but a plan of collaboration. 4 areas were being assessed:-
 - street lighting and home to school transport, as these were not performing as well as they should
 - looking at further opportunities where a case for change was positive and beneficial to residents and would reduce costs
 - an audit report had been undertaken and there was an opportunity for Highways to work together with Environment
 - Developing our commitment to the regional developments on public transport. Decisions would be based on a sound business case for change.

The report together with the comments from Partnerships Scrutiny Committee were to be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 23rd October.

It was agreed to schedule a Special Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5th December, 2012, for the updated report detailing collaborative options for the future to be presented.

RESOLVED that the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee support the following recommendations:-

- (i) *Due to the Business Case not making a clear case for a fully integrated Highways and Infrastructure Service, Conwy and Denbighshire do not proceed with this option;*
- (ii) *Conwy and Denbighshire continue to look for further opportunities to rationalise management, reduce costs and improve services to our residents by:*
 - a. *Strengthening those areas of sub-service that are under single management*
 - b. *Exploring the Highways and Infrastructure sub-service areas where collaboration might bring benefits to our residents*
 - c. *Exploring local (Authority specific) opportunities for collaboration and joint management arrangements between existing services, and*
 - d. *Maintaining and developing our commitment to the regional developments on transport which, if delivered well, may secure additional benefits. Decisions will need to be based on a sound business case for change for in respect of such elements.*
- (iii) *A Special Partnerships Scrutiny meeting be arranged for 5th December, 2012 to receive the updated Conwy and Denbighshire Highways and Infrastructure Collaboration report.*

The meeting concluded at 10.55 a.m.