

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 26 September 2013 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Ann Davies, Meirick Davies, Pat Jones, Margaret McCarroll, Dewi Owens, Bill Tasker and Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director Modernisation and Wellbeing (SE), 14 – 19 Network Co-ordinator (JG), LSB Development Officer (BM), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE), and Democratic Services Officer (KE).

Councillor Gwyneth Kensler and Councillor David Smith

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bill Cowie, Alice Jones and Merfyn Parry and from Co-opted Members Gill Greenland, Debra Houghton and Nicola Lewis.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

None.

4 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

As there had been no CVs submitted for the Vice-Chair role it was agreed to postpone nominations until the next meeting.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 18 July 2013 were submitted.

Matters Arising:

Clarification was sought as to whether the Welsh Government (WG) 'Visible and Viable Places Scheme' was the fund that Denbighshire County Council had recently been unsuccessful in securing a bid for Rhyl Town Centre. It was confirmed that it was that further discussions were taking place with WG regarding possible funding streams.

It was questioned why Denbighshire CAMHS was being relocated from Ysbyty Glan Clwyd to the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Rhyl? Officers undertook to make further enquiries regarding this matter.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2013 be approved as a correct record.

6 HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH EAST WALES

The Chair welcomed back Professor Michael Scott, Vice-Chancellor of Glyndwr University to update the committee following a recent review on Higher Education – particular in relation to working with local businesses (apprenticeships) and the impact on the local economy.

Professor Scott felt that the timing was significant as the report by Sir Adrian Webb had just been published. Although it was too soon to comment he felt that there would be few surprises. It was expected that the report would be discussed in detail in December.

Professor Scott reported that it had been a successful year with a review by the professional accreditation body which gave a glowing report as did a review of foundation degrees.

Although the change in financing saw a drop in student numbers last year – 645 from Denbighshire - they increased again this academic year. Approximately 22% of Denbighshire's students go on to undertake Higher Education at Glyndwr University.

The University continues to undertake ground breaking research in the production of mirrors for the world's largest telescope. In September the University achieved the required level of accuracy for polished mirrors, a world first – 10 nanometers. This accuracy is still to be verified by the European Southern Observatory but the hope is that this could lead to manufacturing, including jobs and apprenticeships in Denbighshire.

Other research projects attracting international attention are the diamond cutting templates – producing screen protectors for computer tablets etc - and investigating new production techniques for manufacturing solar energy cells.

The Chair thanked Professor Scott for his presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Concern was raised over the headlines in the morning's newspaper that reported the alleged poor ranking of the university in the UK overall. Professor Scott explained that the rankings were misleading as the requirement to submit the information was voluntary. There were establishments within Wales who had not input the data – they may have performed worse. There was a possibility that all those institutions who failed to supply the information in the UK did less well than those who supplied them which could skew the results that the newspaper were reporting on.

There followed a discussion regarding the range of courses offered at the University, impact of increased course fees and the prospects for graduates. The majority of graduates gained employment in Wales, 94.2% of graduates gained employment within 6 months. The average starting salary for graduates was the second highest in Wales.

Glyndwr University was the first university to differentiate between course costs, the highest fees being for engineering at £8000. Currently the Welsh Government subsidised the fees of Welsh domiciled students, suggestions had been made that the subsidy should only be paid for Welsh domiciled students studying at a Welsh university in future.

RESOLVED the Committee asked Professor Scott if he would provide a further written report to them, for information purposes, outlining the following information:

1. *current and future developments for the University locally;*
2. *the educational services delivered for Denbighshire students*
3. *data on Denbighshire student enrolment and qualifications (including progression e.g. apprenticeships, employment or FE)*
4. *information on how the College works with Denbighshire schools and further education establishments which educate Denbighshire residents;*
5. *financial information i.e. funding and spending;*
6. *partnership arrangements with other educational establishments and industry*
7. *the University's current priorities, and its long-term vision and ambitions*
8. *information on how the University's core business is developed and tailored to meet and support the evolving needs of North East Wales' economic development ambition*
9. *the implications to Glyndwr University of the conclusions of Sir Adrian Webb's review, including the proposal that the University and Coleg Cambria should federate, and how the University is proposing to respond to the review's findings*

7 COLEG CAMBRIA

The Chair introduced David Jones, Principal of Coleg Cambria to provide an overview of the newly merged college, its current and future developments for the college locally.

Coleg Cambria was formed by the merger of Deeside, Yale and Llysfasi colleges and began operating on 1st August 2013. Referring to a presentation (previously circulated) Mr Jones emphasised the importance of the 12 merger commitments and their aspirations to become an internationally recognised college of excellence.

To that end the college has been invited to become a member of the 157 Group – 30 of the largest colleges of further education committed to promoting and maintaining the highest standards of education and management. In total 1,848 Denbighshire students were receiving their education at Coleg Cambria.

The college has partnerships with local networks which has developed excellent work based learning opportunities. There are 275 people on apprenticeship schemes in Denbighshire with programs in 126 companies.

The college has strong school links, 173 students attend Llysfasi from schools every week where there is a growing provision for agriculture, animal care, construction, motor vehicle and salon services courses. The college also works in partnership with Denbighshire County Council who have a learning coach based at Llysfasi and promote Potential - assisting learners with difficulties due to their background – and Llwyddo'n Lleol, an enterprise development opportunity in the community. Coleg Cambria also worked closely with Glyndŵr University.

The biggest industry in Wales is farming and agriculture. Llysfasi has recently undergone extensive building developments of a new milking facility and agricultural teaching block. The college are committed to getting Llysfasi prominently featured at the Royal Welsh Show.

Members enquired whether Coleg Cambria was working with the National Graphene Institute at the University of Manchester. Mr Jones advised that they were not at present, but in his capacity as Chair of Deeside Enterprise Zone he was aware of the Institute's work.

Mr Jones did raise concerns on the possible detrimental effect on Llysfasi's Welsh ethos if Coleg Cambria was not in future responsible for delivering Welsh courses for adult learners.

The committee complimented Mr Jones on the work of the college and expressed their pride at having such a quality land focussed college in their locality.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN 2012/12 AND 2013/14

The Community Safety Partnership Manager highlighted the main areas covered by the update report (previously circulated) particularly with regard to the CSP priority areas which showed an encouraging reduction in incidents including:

- Violent crime down 6.5%
- Violence against the person down 6.1%
- Violence under the influence of alcohol down 2.7%

Discussion took place around the priority areas of the report:

- The Chair questioned whether the changes to welfare system and the implementation of the bedroom tax in particular impacted on crime figures. The CSP Manager responded that focus has been on opportunist burglary

and robbery for that reason, the incidents of both crimes had reduced. The statistics are monitored at quarterly meetings where emerging trends are identified and intervention methods implemented when needed.

- Attention was drawn to Serious Sexual Offences which had shown a reduction by 1.8% (2 victims fewer) in Denbighshire but still ranked the highest in a comparative table of counties of similar demography. There has been a campaign in schools raising awareness of sexual offences, including the Cat's Paw Theatre Forum whose performance highlights what is and is not acceptable behaviour.
- Antisocial incidents in the environment, particularly licenced premises have dropped. It was felt that the implementation of better practices, inspection by Licencing Officers and the accompaniment of a uniformed police officer at premises all contributed to this.
- Domestic violence victims reduced by 55 in 2012/13. This was attributed partly to a pilot scheme of referral to Multi-Agency Risk Conferences (MARACs) where earlier intervention at lower level appeared to prevent escalation.

Funding for CSP and its associated projects have historically been delivered by way of a grant from the Home Office. These funds are now in control of the new Police and Crime Commissioner who will assess applications for funding against other North Wales CSPs.

In response to Members' questions the CSP Manager agreed to raise with officials from the Police Service the feasibility of establishing a helpline for burglary victims and for making 'the use of alcohol' question on the incident report forms a mandatory question.

***RESOLVED** that, subject to receiving a response to the above questions, the committee notes the contents of the performance report and agrees to continue to monitor the priorities and outcomes.*

9 SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE JOINT CONWY & DENBIGHSHIRE LOCAL SERVICE BOARD

The Local Service Board Development Officer presented a report (previously circulated) requesting the Committee to make a decision on which option to employ within Denbighshire for the future scrutiny of the Conwy & Denbighshire LSB.

The options given were:

- Option 1: Utilise existing separate Partnerships Scrutiny Committees
- Option 2: Utilise existing separate Partnerships Scrutiny Committees with cooption
- Option 3: Develop a new joint Conwy and Denbighshire LSB Scrutiny Committee with no co-option (Sub-Committee of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committees)

- Option 4: Develop a new joint Conwy and Denbighshire LSB Scrutiny Committee with co-option (Sub-Committee of the Partnerships Scrutiny
- Option 5: Option 3 & 4 but independent from the existing local authority system

The LSB Development Officer explained that Conwy had already agreed to implement Option 2 and that it was the preferred option.

A discussion around the merits of a joint committee ensued, it was felt by some committee members that it was the obvious and most cost effective mechanism for scrutinising a shared board would be a joint scrutiny committee, as this and would avoid duplication in being scrutinised twice.

Other members recollected previous joint ventures where conflict in priorities of the separate Authorities had caused issues and the difference in Local Member numbers had caused an imbalance.

It was felt that the choice was academic given that Conwy had already made their decision. It was formally proposed to implement Option 2. The proposal was agreed by the majority of the Committee.

With respect of the organisations represented on the LSB who should be invited to nominate members to serve as co-opted members on the Partnerships LSB Scrutiny Committee, it was decided to defer any decision on this matter until a later date pending the conclusion of the current WG consultation on the Designated Persons Order and that the LSB Development Officer liaise with the Scrutiny Coordinator and other officers on who could potentially be invited to serve as co-optees.

The Committee, by a majority:

RESOLVED that –

(i) in principle the preferred option for scrutinising the Joint Conwy and Denbighshire Local Service Board from Denbighshire's perspective would be to utilise the existing Partnerships Scrutiny Committee with co-opted members without voting rights from amongst the Joint Local Service Board's member organisations; and

(ii) a further report be presented to the Committee at a later date on the preferred number of co-opted members that should serve on the Joint LSB Scrutiny Committee, and which LSB organisations should be represented on the scrutiny committee.

10 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) introduced a report (previously circulated) regarding the Partnerships Committee's forward work programme and highlighted where decisions were required from the Group.

Items scheduled for November included:

1. Families First
2. Regional Commissioning Hub for high cost low volume placements
3. Regional Passenger Transport Service
4. Heritage and Arts Service

It was agreed that the Lead Members should be invited to attend for items 1 and 3, attendance for item 2 should be left to the Lead Member's discretion and the Lead Member was not required to attend for item 4. It was therefore:

RESOLVED that subject to the above to approve the Committee's forward work programme.

11 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Pat Jones had visited Ty Mor, a house in the community for people with mental health problems. Councillor Jones commented on how impressed she was with the project, with the service users' treatment and dignity and particularly how inclusive the surrounding neighbourhood were of the project.

It was felt that this unit should be promoted for its good practice in other areas where there has been planning objections from local residents due to stereotypical ideas of mental health care in the community.

The Chair gave a verbal report on a recent Service Challenge meeting for the Children and Family Service that she had recently taken part in.

Meeting concluded at 12:40pm