

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl on Thursday, 7 November 2013 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Bill Cowie, Meirick Davies, Pat Jones and Merfyn Parry

Councillors Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services and Eryl Williams, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Education were also in attendance for specific agenda items relating to their portfolios.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Directors: Modernisation and Wellbeing (SE) and Economic and Community Ambition (EM), Partnerships and Communities Team Manager (LG), Commissioning and Evaluation Officer (JJH), LSCB Business Manager (GH), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

QUORUM

The Chair reported that the meeting was inquorate but Councillor Bill Cowie was expected shortly and a quorum would then be reached. It was agreed to proceed with the meeting on the basis that any decisions made could be ratified upon his arrival.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Ann Davies, Alice Jones, Margaret McCarroll, Dewi Owens and Bill Tasker. Apologies had also been received from Councillors Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Development and David Smith, Lead Member for Public Realm who had been unable to attend for those agenda items relating to their portfolios.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The committee noted that no CVs/statements had been received for the position of Vice Chair of the committee for the remainder of the 2013/14 municipal year.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Meirick Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item number 7 – 'North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Improvement Objectives for 2014/15 and beyond' because he was Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 26 September 2013 were submitted.

Accuracy – Page 5 – Present – Dr. Dawn Marjoram had been present at the last meeting but her attendance had not been recorded within the minutes.

Matters Arising – Page 6 – Item No. 5 Minutes Matters Arising – The Scrutiny Coordinator confirmed that enquiries had been made regarding the relocation of CAMHS and she would pursue a response.

Page 6 – Item No. 6 Higher Education in North East Wales – The Chair reported upon a letter she had received from Professor Scott raising concerns regarding the manner in which he had been addressed at the last meeting. An apology had been issued and the Chair asked that in order to avoid a future recurrence members raise any such issues with her directly prior to the meeting. The Scrutiny Coordinator confirmed Professor Scott had been invited to attend a future meeting.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 be approved as a correct record.

6 FAMILIES FIRST

Councillor Eryl Williams introduced the report (previously circulated) highlighting the excellent work undertaken and comprehensive programme in place to provide support for families. The report detailed the providers' progress to date in delivering their services, the Families First Action Plan, and Outcome 4 of the BIG Plan. Details of the Families First Programme in Denbighshire (Appendix 1) together with a confidential case study (Appendix 2) had been attached to the report.

The Families First Programme promoted the development of effective multi-agency systems and support, with a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention for families. The Partnerships and Communities Team Manager (PCTM) and the Commissioning and Evaluation Officer (C&EO) elaborated upon the range of services provided in Denbighshire and progress in delivering projects together with the latest programme activities. In terms of funding £1.2m (2012/13) and £1.3m (2013/14) had been allocated to support non-commissioned and strategically commissioned services. Indications were that funding for 2014/15 would be £1.3m. To enable the committee to consider the confidential case study (Appendix 2 to the report) it was **RESOLVED** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information would likely be disclosed as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The PCTM used the case study to illustrate the effectiveness of the multi-agency approach in supporting a particular family leading to positive outcomes. After consideration of the case study the meeting resumed in **OPEN SESSION**.

The committee noted the range of services provided and the progress in delivering those services within the Family First Programme. Members commended the successful partnership working as evidenced by the family case study and acknowledged the value of the programme for families. During debate the committee sought assurances regarding future funding allocations and clarification of future service provision. In terms of the sub-regional commissioning project officers were also asked to elaborate upon how key benefits would be achieved and outcomes measured. Officers responded that –

- specific grant funding to support Families First was allocated by the Welsh Government – it was possible that future funding may form part of the general funding allocation
- despite being a five year programme funding was allocated annually which resulted in difficulties in terms of future planning provision and contracts. The Council was required to report to the Welsh Government on a quarterly basis on funding expenditure
- current contracts/service level agreements ended on 31 March 2014 and the Families First Project Board was being reconvened to project manage the commissioning process and make recommendations to the Operational Group
- regional learning sets had been established as part of the programme which should produce financial savings for partners making processes more efficient across a number of areas – by working on this sub-regional commission project (with Wrexham and Conwy Councils), the provision of a Young Carers Service in Denbighshire would save £31k collectively from April 2014 with no detriment to the level of service – other initiatives included streamlining processes for funding applications and the development of a toolkit for tender documentation and generally working together with other agencies to deliver services in a better way.

The committee welcomed the excellent work being carried out but highlighted the difficulties in evaluating the overall impact and success of the programme and asked whether more measureable outcomes could be provided. It was suggested that future reports include the actual figures behind the percentages and consideration be given to the merits of introducing a traffic light system to denote progress. Officers acknowledged the difficulties of measuring performance, particularly across collective agencies, and were working on systems to capture data and develop outcome tools. Actual figures in addition to percentages could be provided. The Chair thanked officers for the report and it was –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) subject to members' comments above, the providers' progress in delivering services and the latest information regarding programme activities in relation to the Families First Programme in Denbighshire be noted, and*
- (b) a further progress report be submitted to the committee in approximately eight months' time or such earlier time if the funding allocation expected for 2014/15 did not materialise.*

Upon Councillor Bill Cowie's arrival at this point the committee became quorate and previous decisions were ratified.

7 NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2014/15 AND BEYOND

[Councillor Meirick Davies declared a personal interest in this item]

A copy of the public consultation document on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's plans for fire and rescue services in North Wales for 2014/15 and beyond (previously circulated) was submitted for members' consideration and comments. Chief Fire Officer Simon Smith (CFO) and Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dawn Docx (DCFO) were in attendance at the meeting.

The CFO delivered a power point presentation on the proposed improvement objectives and plans to provide and deliver future services in North Wales. The three proposed improvement objectives covered the following –

- 1 – to help keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation
- 2 – to ensure that North Wales gets the best possible level of service within financial constraints, use a variety of management solutions to optimise fire and rescue cover in the area
- 3 – to implement a 3-year financial plan for 2014/15 to 2016/17 that funds the current level of service, but that aims to limit the cost of doing so to the equivalent of an extra £1 per year per head of population

In presenting the future plans the CFO elaborated upon the reasoning behind those proposals and provided some background information, including savings already made by the Fire Authority, together with key information about the service. The potential impact in budgetary terms was also highlighted. Councillor Meirick Davies, Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority highlighted changes in the service with a shift of emphasis from reactive to prevention together with the accompanying change in working patterns and reallocation of resources. He advised that Corporate Governance Committee had considered budget proposals the previous day and it would have been useful if they too had heard the rationale behind the current proposals. The reality of budget cuts in the Fire Authority could lead to the loss of fire stations and fire officers.

In terms of the budget proposals for 2014/15 and in light of the local government revenue settlement, Fire Officers advised that the financial proposals were being revisited to explore the possibility of freezing the budget for a fourth year. The Corporate Director: Modernising and Wellbeing confirmed a 7.7% reduction in the Council's budget in real terms and the proposals detailed in the consultation report would amount to an additional contribution of £90k.

Members recognised the valuable service provided by the Fire and Rescue Authority and reported upon a number of positive examples based on their own personal experiences and good work carried out within their communities. The Fire Officers and Councillor Davies responded to questions raised as follows –

- reported upon the excellent working relationship between the Fire Authority and Council departments cooperating with a view to safeguarding the most vulnerable within society – 30% of referrals came from partners which had exceeded the set target of 25%
- elaborated upon the programme of home fire safety checks and the supply and installation of smoke alarms free of charge together with a range of other interventions and precautions to prevent fire related incidents
- confirmed that the map denoting whole time and retained fire stations in the presentation differed from that circulated as part of the consultation and had been previously emailed to committee members with the presentation slides
- highlighted the potential impact on services as a result of not increasing the budget and confirmed a special meeting of the Fire Authority had been scheduled for 5 December to further discuss the budget for 2014/15.

The Chair thanked the Fire Officers for their attendance at the meeting and interesting and informative presentation.

***RESOLVED** that the Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation document on its future plans be received and the latest position regarding the Authority's draft budget for 2014/15, in light of the recent Welsh Government announcement on future funding for North Wales local authorities, be noted.*

At this juncture (10.45 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for a refreshment break.

8 CONWY & DENBIGHSHIRE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (LSCB) ANNUAL REPORT AND UPDATE ON THE INTEGRATION OF THE NORTH WALES LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDRENS BOARDS

Councillor Bobby Feeley introduced the report (previously circulated) presenting Conwy & Denbighshire Local Safeguarding Children Board's Annual Report and updating members on progress made towards the integrations and collaboration of the North Wales Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

The LSCB Annual Report provided a brief overview of the Board's operations including its governance and financial arrangements. It also summarised key priorities for 2012/13 together with progress made. The Business Manager, Conwy & Denbighshire LSCB (BM) elaborated upon other key points relating to –

- membership and attendance
- financial contributions from partner organisations, and
- the annual self-assessment process.

In terms of developing regional approaches the North Wales LSCBs had agreed four areas of work which were being progressed further. Discussions were continuing on the role and governance of the Regional Safeguarding Children Board and its relationship to local arrangements. It was highlighted that the current public services review would likely impact on regional arrangements.

The committee considered the development of regional arrangements and acknowledged that certain processes could benefit from a collaborative approach. However members stressed the importance of ensuring that the current levels of protection for children locally would not be jeopardised as a result and the robust arrangements for safeguarding children were maintained. In scrutinising the report members expressed particular concern regarding the level of domestic violence and raised questions regarding contributory factors to domestic abuse, the role of the police and referral process and sought assurances regarding how the issue was being addressed. Further assurances were sought regarding progress in other areas of safeguarding children. In responding to members officers –

- confirmed that domestic abuse continued to be a priority for the LSCB with work on-going to identify children experiencing difficulties due to their parents/carers drug and alcohol, mental health or domestic violence problems to ensure concerns did not escalate from safeguarding to child protection issues – the Head of Children and Families Services and Youth Justice Services Strategic Manager were working at a strategic level to tackle this issue from the child’s perspective. They would now be attending Community Safety Partnership (CSP) meetings on a regular basis
- acknowledged a mix of contributory factors to domestic abuse and the difficulties in determining the main factors and whether more cases had been linked to domestic violence as a result of the recession and financial pressures faced by families
- elaborated upon the involvement of the North Wales Police and other agencies within the process advising that LSCB considered the number of domestic abuse incidents involving children and young people on a quarterly basis – this information could be included as a confidential appendix in future reports to the committee
- explained that more targeted and intelligent information was being provided for referrals via CID16 forms to enable better identification of those at risk and for the appropriate help to be directed at families – the Joint Referral and Assessment Panel assessed those referrals and a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was also being piloted in Wrexham
- whilst a very small proportion of referrals resulted in children being taken into care many families benefited from support provided by Children’s Services and programmes such as Families First
- confirmed that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board had recruited their Safeguarding Team in order to support the local safeguarding agenda.

[At this point Councillor Meirick Davies left the meeting and it became inquorate.]

Members noted the crucial contribution of partners to the local safeguarding agenda and the importance of the committee’s role in monitoring the LSCB’s work. As domestic violence was still a significant problem within communities members asked that particular reference be made to this issue in future committee reports together with work undertaken in that regard with the Community Safety Partnership. The importance of considering trends together with the effectiveness of the measures introduced to address them was also highlighted.

The Chair referred to her role on the Adoption & Fostering Panels and the excellent work being carried out to support families in that regard and conveyed the committee's appreciation for that work.

RECOMMENDED that –

- (a) *subject to members' comments above the Conwy and Denbighshire Local Safeguarding Children Board's Annual report be received and progress made towards the collaboration of the North Wales Local Safeguarding Children Boards be noted;*
- (b) *a further report be submitted to the committee in approximately six months' time containing the following –*
 - *progress in delivering the key priorities for 2013/14 and information on key priorities for 2014/15*
 - *an analysis of data and trends identified in 2013/14 to determine which approaches worked well and which were not as successful, and*
 - *an update on the latest national and regional developments with respect to Local Safeguarding Children Boards.*

9 TRANSFORMING TRANSPORT - REGIONAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT COLLABORATION PROJECT UPDATE

The Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (CDECA) submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the committee on progress with the Regional Passenger Transport Collaboration project since Cabinet approved the Outline Business Case in May 2013. The Project Scope had been attached to the report.

A regional project manager had been appointed funded through the European Social Fund and a revised project plan had been agreed by all six councils. A progress report was provided on the following areas identified for early implementation –

- a joint approach to CRB (DBS) checks – good progress had been made and a business case would be developed for a single centralised service to achieve a more resilient and cost effective means of checking drivers resulting in no budget pressure for the authority
- a joint approach to Concessionary Fares and Concessionary Passes – this area was more complex and was still being explored
- review and joint procurement of Passenger Information (including time tables and other paper/electronic/real time information) – external support would be sought to consider appropriate systems and software to develop this approach and provide greater alignment and integration of services
- other potential projects included the development of Community Transport options and closer collaboration on Road Safety works and programmes.

The Chair queried the portability of CRBs between departments and between outside organisations and the Council, the Corporate Director: Modernising and Wellbeing reported upon work being undertaken by HR in that regard. In terms of

the joint approach to CRB checks for passenger transport the committee sought assurances that the robust arrangements currently in place locally would not be diluted as a result. The CDECA advised of the intention to use best practice across the region in order to both maintain and raise standards. With regard to concessionary fares and passes clarification was sought regarding the reduced need for equipment and subsequent reduction in maintenance costs. The CDECA understood this reference referred to the actual equipment which produced concessionary passes and agreed to check the reference during a meeting with the Project Board the following day. She also agreed to impress upon the Board the committee's views that the robust processes for dealing with CRB checks must not be compromised as a result of the joint approach.

RECOMMENDED that –

- (a) *subject to members' comments above the progress report on the Regional Passenger Transport Collaboration project be received and noted, and*
- (b) *any significant future developments in progressing the collaboration project be brought to the committee's attention for information/action as appropriate.*

10 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the committee's future work programme and providing an update on relevant issues. A draft forward work programme (Appendix 1); Cabinet's forward work programme (Appendix 2) and Progress with Committee Resolutions (Appendix 3) had been attached to the report.

The Scrutiny Coordinator reported upon changes to the work programme and various matters requiring attention. During discussion the committee –

- agreed to invite the relevant Lead Cabinet Members to attend the next meeting when specific items relating to their portfolios would be considered
- agreed that the Local Safeguarding Children Board report be scheduled with the Community Safety Partnership report for the meeting in May/June 2014 with particular reference to domestic violence matters and work undertaken with and to complement both groups
- noted the update on actions arising from the minutes of the last meeting as detailed within the committee's information brief (previously circulated) together with information reports provided on (1) Heritage and Countryside Review Update; (2) Conwy & Denbighshire Joint Local Service Board, and (3) Leader's service visit with the Business Planning and Performance Team.

RECOMMENDED that, *subject to the above amendments and requests, the work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.*

11 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

In the absence of Councillor Margaret McCarroll, the Chair read out her report on the in-house provider visit to Hafan Deg Day Centre undertaken with Councillor

Bobby Feeley on 7 October 2013. The report had been largely positive but some concerns had been raised about uncertainty surrounding the Centre's future, and the integration of service users from the Prestatyn area who had until recently attended the Llys Nant Day Centre. The Scrutiny Coordinator confirmed that the report and feedback from other in-house provider visits would be considered by Performance Scrutiny Committee in March 2014.

RECOMMENDED that the verbal report on Councillor Margaret McCarroll's visit to Hafan Deg Day Centre be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 p.m.