

Minutes of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 25 September 2014 at 9.30 am at Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl on Thursday, 25 September 2014 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Vice-Chair), Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Ann Davies, Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Pat Jones, Margaret McCarroll and Dewi Owens

Also Present:

Councillor David Smith, Nicola Stubbins (Director of Social Services), Rhian Evans (Scrutiny Officer), Liz Grieve (Partnerships and Communities Team Manager), Sian Taylor (Community Safety Partnership Manager), Vicky Allen (Early Intervention Strategy & Support Manager), Jan Juckes-Hughes (Families First Programme Officer).

1 APOLOGIES

Leader and Lead Member for Social Care (Adults and Children's Services).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters however the Chair, with the Committee's agreement altered the order of business on the agenda taking item 6 before item 5.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 5 June, 2014 were submitted.

Matters arising

Under Item 6, Conwy & Denbighshire LSCB, members asked that the previously requested:

- information report on the membership of the Regional Safeguarding Children's Board and the Conwy & Denbighshire LSCB Delivery Group.
- information on the numbers etc. of home educated children

be circulated forthwith.

A Council Briefing Session on Corporate Parenting has been scheduled for November 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 June, 2014, be received and approved as a correct record.

5 THE BIG PLAN 1: PART 1, 2011-14 - EVALUATION AND CLOSURE REPORT

The Partnerships and Communities Team Manager introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) drawing Members' attention to the achievements and lessons learnt with respect to each of the outcomes contained in the Big Plan 1.

Committee members agreed Partnerships and Communities Team Manager that the BIG Plan had been very ambitious and included a number of long-term aims. Whilst a number of the initiatives and projects included in the BIG Plan had progressed well, others had not progressed as well. It was therefore difficult to quantify if the Plan on the whole had been delivered and whether residents' expectations had been met. A number of lessons had been learnt through attempting to deliver the Plan which would assist with the devising of future plans. Working relationships with partner organisations was now much stronger with both partners and the Council now being more willing to work with each other to plan and deliver services. It was also evident that early intervention and prevention work was paying dividends in reducing pressure on statutory social care services in both children and adult social care.

Whilst member acknowledged that improvements had been made in delivering services through the BIG Plan's existence, they also had concerns with respect to a number of current service changes. Mention was made of difficulties encountered in sheltered housing complexes following the withdrawal of the warden service. An example was given of a resident who had reported a burst pipe in a flat and when no one attended to it the resident rang up for a second time only to find out that the initial enquiry had not been logged. Officers undertook to follow this up to ensure that all complaints or service requests are logged in future. Other members drew the Committee's attention to the complexity of forms and questionnaires which were issued to residents. An example was given of a recent housing service revised tenancy agreement form, on which members had received numerous enquiries due

to its complexity and of a person who had attended one of the Council's offices to apply for a blue disabled badge to be told that they would have to come back the next day if the needed help to complete the form. Members emphasised the need to have front-line customer contact staff fully trained to fill in all forms with the public at the initial point of contact whenever possible and for staff at all times to be helpful and accommodating.

Members agreed that future Single Integrated Plans should be more focussed, with fewer outcomes and priorities. They should also offer clarity on how statutory duties would be met when those services were delivered in partnership. Future plans should also be more specific about any initiatives which would be required in order to deliver improved outcomes, including the desired outcomes and the timescale for their delivery. The performance management framework for future plans should set a manageable set of measures to facilitate meaningful scrutiny of activities, performance and outcomes. The BIG Plan had proved that, in the field of social care, early intervention had the potential to deliver benefits for organisations and better outcomes for residents. Consequently the early intervention approach should form the basis of all future strategies and be an integral part of future service planning. It was:

Resolved: - subject to the above comments to:

(i) note the BIG Plan's impact on the people of Denbighshire and the lessons learnt from managing the programme; and

(ii) to endorse the proposed change of approach for future strategy and service planning.

6 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The Chair advised the Committee that, for the purpose of business item 6 – Community Safety Update, it would be sitting as the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006, ss.19 and 20

The Lead Member for Public Realm introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) which presented the Committee with the Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) performance report of 2013/14 and its priorities for 2014/15.

The CSP Manager detailed the information contained within the reports and answered members' questions on various aspects of it. Members acknowledged that the statistics presented a positive picture for crime figures in the area, with the trend in the number of reported incidents in the majority of crime categories being downwards. Nevertheless, Members felt that this mirrored the national trend and therefore it was difficult to quantify whether the reduction locally was entirely down to the CSP's work or a mixture of local work and national trends.

Questions were asked with respect to:

- the value for money realised from the CSP
- Domestic abuse and the gap in the provision of The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service (IDVA)
- on the correlation of the CSP's strategy and action plans and those of the Council and other partners,
- and whether these strategies complemented and supported each other, added value and improved outcomes for residents.

Explanations were given on the different funding streams open to the CSP to apply for funding and the use made of the funding received. Examples where use of their funding successfully reduced incidents of crime included:

- increased supervision of taxi ranks in Rhyl over the Christmas period
- provision of polycarbonate drinking vessels in 4 pubs to reduce instances of "glassing"
- theatre in education project and
- outreach workers assisting street drinkers in Rhyl, reducing antisocial behaviour by 25%

Officers acknowledged that in the past the CSP's Strategy and work had seemed slightly detached from that of the Council and its Local Service Board (LSB) partners. The introduction of the new Well-being Plan and the change in management arrangements for the CSP now meant that they would form part of the Communities and Partnerships Team. It was envisaged that future work and action plans would have better and stronger links with all other high level plans and with Council Departments - such as education and social services.

Members did raise concerns on the lack of continuity within communities in the Police Service, with local police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) being moved elsewhere once a good working relationship had been forged with them.

Concerns were also raised with respect to the level of the Police's financial contribution toward the Council's CCTV Service and their unwillingness to monitor the CCTV system in certain areas of the county, particularly in view of the use made by them of footage when prosecuting suspected offenders. Members asked that this matter be raised again when CCTV was to be discussed at the next round of Budget Workshops and at Performance Scrutiny in November.

Following a detailed discussion the Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above observations to:

(i) note the Community Safety Partnership's performance in 2013/14; and

(ii) to endorse its priorities going forward as outlined in Appendix 2, with particular emphasis being focussed on improving the provision of domestic abuse services in order to provide a consistent level of service at all times

7 FAMILIES FIRST

The Early Intervention Strategy and Support Manager and the Families First Programme Officer introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) which outlined providers' progress in delivering services and the Families First Action plan which was aimed at delivering Outcome 4 of the BIG Plan.

The Committee was advised that the early intervention work undertaken had resulted in 377 cases that had been supported, averting the need for statutory children's services being required at a later date. The money spent, which was the Welsh Government's Families First Grant of £1.3m per annum was therefore being utilised in much the same way as spend to save initiatives.

Despite the scheme's benefits for families and evidenced returns for local authorities there were uncertainties going forward on the grant level for the next couple of years and on the scheme's future from 2017 onwards.

In reply to questions on what would happen to the early intervention services (the majority of which were commissioned from the independent sector) if the grant ceased, officers advised that the Council may well have to consider moving money from certain statutory functions to fund the early intervention services. They would have to consider which independent/community groups would merit funding based on the benefits of their work to alleviate pressures on statutory children's services.

Officers advised that a number of high profile organisations and individuals were lobbying for the continuation of the grant, or for it to be included in the Council's base budget and hypothocated for Families First work.

Members were encouraged by the Chair and the Director of Social Services to speak to their political representatives/parties, voluntary and community organisations, emphasising the benefits of the Families First grant money - as an investment to save on future costs and to improve outcomes for families and children - and seeking their support for its continuation in one form or another.

Questions were raised regarding disability training and the "Buddying Scheme". It was explained that there was a reduction in the funding set aside for training to reflect the fact that it wasn't a continuous need – once undertaken requirement is no longer needed.

The Buddying Scheme is an initiative run by Barnardos to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream activities in the community. Member asked that the statistics on the Buddying Scheme for disabled children be circulated to them.

Following a detailed discussion the Committee congratulated officers of their success with this scheme and:

Resolved: subject to the above observations -

(i) to support the work undertaken with the Families First Programme;

(ii) to emphasise its concerns with respect to the potential impact of future funding cuts and/or funding withdrawal on the excellent work and achievements already realised, and on statutory children's social services going forward; and

(iii) that Committee members make every effort to promote the benefits, and the invest to save returns, of the Families First funding to national politicians and other interested parties with a view to seeking confirmation, clarification and assurances on future funding

The Director of Social Services informed the Committee that Denbighshire County Council had been chosen to pilot a new outcomes framework for looked after children, emanating from the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

8 DENBIGHSHIRE'S WELL BEING PLAN

The Partnerships and Communities Team manager introduced the report and associated draft Wellbeing Plan for Denbighshire. This Plan would replace the BIG Plan when that came to an end and as mentioned earlier under the above business item on the BIG Plan it would be subject to a far lighter performance monitoring regime.

The proposed Plan had one theme, that of Supporting Independence and Resilience. This theme would run through all of Denbighshire's future business planning, be it as a sole entity or with partner organisations. Communities and individuals would in future be supported to be independent and resilient, with a view to nurturing strong communities which would have the skills and knowledge to support residents and other communities at times of need e.g. how people pulled together during the floods.

Members emphasised the need for the Council to also help communities to be independent by supporting them when they suggested initiatives to help the community. Libraries in particular were mentioned as an asset which could be used for all kinds of community and charitable groups, as a source of income for the Council and a rent saving initiative for charities etc.

Members were advised on the themes which had featured in the consultation responses, these being the Welsh Language, children and young people, and environmental sustainability. The Plan would be strengthened based on these

themes and the Committee's observations prior to being presented to Council for approval in November 2014.

The Committee:

Resolved: subject to the above observations, the inclusion of the above listed themes including an ambition to make better and more effective use of the Council's assets to promote independence and resilience, to endorse the draft Wellbeing Plan for submission to County Council for approval

9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) highlighted that the next meeting of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee (6 November) was reserved for the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) related items which included:

1. Localities Service progress report
2. Hygiene and infection control
3. Framework for Delivering Health and Social Care for Older People with Complex Needs
4. Hospital discharge procedures

The SC requested that any questions to be put to the BCUHB representatives should be forwarded to the Committee Chair by 20th October.

Members requested that an information report evaluating the success of the Cats Paw Theatre Group in secondary schools be submitted to the Committee in March 2015 .

The SC explained that there may be a need to leave spaces in the forward work programme to pick up issues that may arise from the ongoing budget workshops. The Committee agreed the forward work programme.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved

10 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones and Meirick Lloyd-Davies had attended a Health Board workshop on developing third sector strategy. The meeting had focussed on the requirement to work more in partnership with voluntary, community and charitable organisations to deliver some services. It was anticipated that a draft strategy would be available by November/ December.

The Chair attended a meeting of Cymru Older People Alliance (COPA) who were targeting volunteers to look out for people who are at risk of dying of loneliness in their own homes. COPA had also raised issues regarding the lack of parking for mobility scooters at Council properties

The Chair also attended the Children and Family Services Service Challenge. The following points were highlighted:

- Sickness absence was above 8% and needed to be reduced, however stress related sickness had improved.
- 88% of performance appraisals had been completed.
- The lack of lift and individual office space at Brighton road was raised as an issue.
- Complaints received by the service rose by 52%. This is higher than other departments but to be expected given the nature of the service.

The Service Challenge for Adult Services was planned for the next afternoon.

The meeting closed at 13:10