

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1A, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 19 March 2015 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Vice-Chair), Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Ann Davies, Meirick Davies and Pat Jones

Councillors Brian Blakeley and Martyn Holland attended as observers.

ALSO PRESENT

Director of Social Services (NS), External Funding Team Leader (SMJ), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Davies, Dewi Owens, Merfyn Parry and Bill Tasker.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Ann Davies declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 "Urgent Item" because her son-in-law was employed at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

In accordance with the requirements of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair declared that he intended to include for discussion the following matter requiring urgent attention under Part II:-

1. Closure of Community Development Agency:- Members expressed concerns about the loss of this service at the end of March, 2015. Albeit a Rhyl based facility it does serve the whole County, particularly individuals and community groups in the county's most deprived wards. The Director of Social Services advised that a decision had been taken in 2013 to reduce the funding to the Community Development Agency (CDA) by £25K.

This decision had been taken partly to deal with reducing budgets, but also to meet the needs of developing and delivering social care services to meet the requirements of new social care legislation. Transitional arrangements had been in place during the last two years and the two staff members affected would move to new roles within the Service. Officers, including the Director had met with Rhyl Town Council and the Rhyl Coastal Partnership with a view to the future of the building and alternative methods of delivering the services available there at present.

It was emphasised that some of the services which the Council currently offered at the Agency were non-statutory services, but during austere times the Authority had to concentrate on statutory services and core functions. Since some services offered by the CDA were offered through other agencies such as the Job Centre it would not be an efficient use of limited Council resources for it to duplicate those services. The Director advised that the Council was content for a 'partner' organisation to take over the facility and to have use of the equipment there which was currently owned by the Council. If a social enterprise took over the building it could benefit from incentives such as reduced rents, rates, utility costs etc. However, the Council could not provide the staff for the Centre as its aims would no longer comply with the Welsh Government's (WG) vision and expectations for social care services going forward. The Corporate Director informed members that another meeting was scheduled to take place within the next few days with the Rhyl Coastal Partnership, which in response to members' questions she advised was a registered constitutional body, to see if its interest in the facility could be progressed.

The Committee were of the view that Rhyl was yet again losing a valuable community service. They informed officers that the community owned a number of items of equipment at the CDA and advised that therefore they should not be moved from the facility without the community's consent. Responding to Members' concerns about how the void left by the CDA's closure could be filled the Director advised that the voluntary sector had an important role to play in this area as it could access funding to support such services from central government. She suggested that it may be useful for the Committee to invite both Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and Rhyl Coastal Partnership to a future meeting to discuss their role in supporting community groups across Denbighshire going forward. It was:-

RESOLVED – *that representatives from Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the Rhyl Coastal Partnership be invited to a future meeting to discuss their role in supporting communities to access services and funding when non-statutory Council services were withdrawn.*

2. Welfare Rights Unit and Macmillan Nursing:- Concerns were raised by Members with respect to the availability of the Macmillan Nursing services to Denbighshire residents following the closure of the Welfare Rights Unit (WRU) at the end of the current financial year. They had been privy to recent information which indicated that the new arrangements for access to Macmillan Nursing care services via the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) were yet to be formally signed, therefore the service would not be up and running by 1 April 2015 as originally intended. The Director of Social Services advised that no formal transition arrangements could be initiated until County Council had taken the decision to withdraw the WRU service. Transitional arrangements were now underway and officers had met with staff the previous day to finalise the arrangements. CAB would gradually be taking over responsibility for hosting the Macmillan Service for Denbighshire for which they would receive funding from the charity.

3. Acute Surgery Services at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd:- Members raised concerns about the future of acute surgery services at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and the accuracy of an article in the Daily Post, dated the 17th March, 2015 in light of assurances given by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's (BCUHB) Chief Executive, Professor Trevor Purt, on acute surgery services that will be available at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in future.

RESOLVED – that a letter be sent to BCUHB's Chief Executive seeking clarity on the types of surgery that would be performed at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in future.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 18th December, 2014 were submitted.

Matters arising:-

8. Rural Development Plan Partnership – The Scrutiny Coordinator explained that a response to a question from Councillor M.LI. Davies, in relation to the awarding funding for projects by Cadwyn Clwyd, would be provided under Agenda Item 5.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

5 CO-ORDINATION OF COMMUNITY FUNDING STREAMS

A copy of a report by the Team Leader Economic and Business Development South (TLEBD), which outlined the the current position with European Union (EU) and other funds currently available for Community benefit, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The report provided the current position and availability of potential funding sources, subject to eligibility criteria, for Community benefit. It detailed the support available to Community groups in applying for funding which was also available via external agencies and support networks, and provided a guide to the main sources of EU and other types of funding currently available.

A guide to the main funding sources currently available had been provided and included EU Funds and EU Structural Funds 2014-2020. It was explained that the amount of matched funding would vary according to each theme and project. The programme level grant rates had been provided to give an indication of grant levels anticipated. The investment objectives for the programmes in Wales had been outlined in the report.

the TLEBD during the presentation of her report informed the Committee that:-

- that the focus of the new round of European Funding had changed. Under the new programme fewer local projects would be funded, the emphasis would be on

large strategic projects that would be delivered on either a sub-regional, regional or even a national basis:

- Cadwyn Clwyd had been appointed as the Local Action Group (LAG) to deliver the LEADER element of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2014/20, but as the European Union (EU) was yet to approve the RDP, funding for projects could not be released and as a result staff had been released or were under notice of redundancy. This was not an ideal situation but it was out of the Council's control;
- Conwy Voluntary Services Council (CVSC) had recently been appointed as administrators for the Gwynt y Môr Windfarm Fund. This had been a consortia bid, which had included Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and Flintshire Voluntary Services Council (FVSC) amongst other partners. The Advisory Group was now scheduled to meet on 7 April to discuss project eligibility criteria and how to progress with the distribution of grants and monies.

In response to Members' questions the TLEBD advised that:-

- with respect to the Gwynt y Môr Community Fund there was some discrepancies on how far inland the benefits of the Fund should be distributed, the reason for this being that whilst the turbines themselves were offshore their visual impact was seen along the coast, and the associated connections and substation were inland, the substation being near St. Asaph, and as
- as part of the Gwynt y Môr Advisory Group work Denbighshire officers had a very good working relationship with all partners, including CVSC. To date Denbighshire had been represented on the Gwynt y Môr Advisory Group by officers, but now that the fund administrator had been appointed it was likely that the membership and the structures would be reviewed;
- commuted sums monies was administered by various Council departments e.g. Public Realm, Planning and Public Protection, Highways and Environmental Services dependent on the basis on which the commuted sums had been granted. She confirmed that all open spaces commuted sums monies had been committed;
- match-funding requirements for the new round of European funding would be: Structural Funds: 75% grant funding, 25% match funding; RDP: 80% grant funding, 20% match funding. No match funding monies had been allocated yet by the Council. The award and allocation of match funding would be considered on each projects' merit. One project had to date been put forward, this related to an education skills project for 14 to 19 year old students who were at risk of becoming disengaged with education. The match funding element of this project would be in the form of Council staff to work on purchasing alternative curriculum provision to reduce the risk of disengagement;
- support with information and accessing for European Funding projects would in future be available through the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), who had dedicated support for this type of work. Information would also be available on the Sell2Wales website;
- a gap analysis was being undertaken to try and identify areas of non-statutory services which may benefit from RDP funding going forward. It was explained that Councillors would have an important role to play going forward as the link between communities and the funding streams, as they would be key in signposting community groups etc. to DVSC/WCVA, to access advice and support;

- not all community funds provided development funding for the purpose of scoping projects, however there was some development funding available for some BIG Lottery projects;
- very large infrastructure projects sponsored by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, such as the electrification of the North Wales railway line, or the proposed tidal lagoon were outside the scope of the European Structural Funds due to their size and cost;
- she was not aware of any community funding available to help first time buyers access the housing market, but she would enquire with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to see if they offered funding for this purpose, and she would check in case the rules relating to green spaces commuted sums had changed.

The Committee were keen that an Elected Member be appointed to represent Denbighshire on the successor body to the Gwynt y Môr Community Funding Advisory Board now that a Fund Administrator had been appointed. They also agreed that the invitation extended to the DVSC to attend a meeting of the Committee also outline members' wishes to discuss with its representatives the DVSC's role in assisting communities to access the various streams of external community funding available to them.

Following further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED – *that:-*

- (a) subject to the above observations, to receive the information;*
- (b) to note the Member's role within the community to identify projects and raise awareness of funding sources available to community groups with a view to maximising their benefits to the communities and support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and its Corporate Plan;*
- (c) to recommend that representations be made to the Gwynt y Môr Community Funding Advisory Group that an Elected Member should in future serve on the relevant body that will oversee the award of grant funding; and*
- (d) that the Committee's future meeting with representatives from Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) include a discussion on the organisation's role in assisting and supporting community groups to access advice on external community funding streams.*

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator (SC), which requested the Committee to review and agree its Forward Work Programme and provided an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

A copy of the 'Member's proposal form' had been included in Appendix 2 and details of the form were provided by the SC. In future no items would be included on a forward work programme without a 'scrutiny proposal form' being completed and accepted for inclusion by the Committee or the SCVCG. The SC explained that assistance in completing forms would be available if required. The Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 3, and a table

summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 4.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board:-

It was explained that as Professor Trevor Purt, Chief Executive of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, had attended a Council Briefing on the 16th March, 2015 to discuss the Board's three year plan with all Councillors it was considered premature to invite BCUHB representatives to the Committee on the 30th April to discuss progress to date. Members agreed that the meeting with Health Service representatives should be deferred until the 17th September, 2015 with the 3rd September as a possible alternative date if required.

Members agreed that Councillor J. Butterfield be appointed the Committee Representative on the Education Service Challenge Group. Appendix 5 included an up to date list of Scrutiny representatives on the Service Challenge Groups.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings, Appendix 1, and the following amendments and additions were agreed:-

30th April, 2015:-

The Scrutiny Coordinator explained that the **Principal Countryside Officer: Warden Services** had indicated that he would be unable to attend the meeting scheduled for the 30th April, 2015 to present the report on the AONB Joint Committee, and it was agreed that the meeting be cancelled. The Committee agreed that a meeting be convened for either the 14th or 21st May, 2015, depending on the availability of those required to attend, to consider the report on the AONB Joint Committee. It was also agreed that representatives from Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the Rhyl Coastal Partnership be invited to the meeting to discuss their role in supporting communities to access services and funding when non-statutory Council services were withdrawn. In response to questions from Members, details of the Membership of the Rhyl Coastal Partnership were provided for the Committee.

30th July, 2015:-

- The SC explained that an officer request for the Committee to consider a report on the Denbighshire Communities First Cluster had been permitted and scheduled into the forward work programme for the 30th July, 2015.

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) had, on the 19th February, 2015, considered the Welsh Government's recent White Paper Devolution, Democracy and Delivery – Reforming Local Government: Power: Power to Local People. Chapter 8 of the White Paper, 'Strengthening the Role of Review', set out the WG's proposals for scrutiny, and a brief summary of the proceedings was provided by the SC.

The Annual Report on the Scrutiny Committees' activities during the year would be presented to the Annual Council meeting in May. An evaluation exercise of Scrutiny had been undertaken with a questionnaire having been circulated to Scrutiny Members, and to a wider group including all Councillors and members of SLT. The SC requested that the questionnaires be returned as soon as possible.

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

7 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

No reports from Committee representatives had been received.

Meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.