

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in CONFERENCE ROOM 1A, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN on Thursday, 2 November 2017 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Gareth Davies, Hugh Irving, Pat Jones, Christine Marston, Melvyn Mile, Andrew Thomas, Rhys Thomas, David Williams and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair)

Cabinet Lead Member – Councillor Bobby Feeley attended for items 5 and 6

Observers: Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies and Councillor Graham Timms

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Head of Community Support Services (PG), Commissioning and Tendering Officer (LD), Homeless Strategy Officer (EL), Chief Finance Officer (RW), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Melvyn Mile declared a personal interest and Councillor Emrys Wynne declared personal interests in item 5, the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 & Denbighshire Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Plan 2018/2019.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd Davies declared a personal interest in item 6, Pooled Budgets (Health & Social Care) – Progress Report.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 14 September 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 THE DENBIGHSHIRE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2017-2021 & DENBIGHSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE / HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PLAN 2018/2019

Councillor Emrys Wynne declared personal interests in this item as he is a private landlord in Denbigh and he is a JP who sits on the North East Wales DRR Panel.

Councillor Melvyn Mile declared a personal interest in this items as he will be a tenant of Grwp Cynefin in the near future.

The Lead Member for Social Care & Children's Services, Councillor Bobby Feeley, introduced the report (previously circulated).

She outlined the purpose of the Supporting People funding provided by the Welsh Government (WG) and the role of the Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC) in relation to Denbighshire's Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Plan. She emphasised that the Strategy was the county's first standalone Homelessness Strategy since the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Previous homelessness prevention work had been included as part of the broader Housing Strategy. Members were advised that both the Strategy and Prevention Plan before them had been consulted on widely by the Homelessness Prevention Team. The Homelessness Prevention Team was a dedicated team which focussed on working with individuals and families to avert them becoming homeless. Membership comprised of the former Supporting People Team and the Housing Solutions Team. Members commended the establishment of a dedicated team to mitigate against the risks of people becoming homeless and asked for details of the officers who worked as part of the Team. Officers undertook to provide this information, but advised that the first point of contact for an individual or a councillor with a homelessness query was the multi-disciplinary Single Point of Access (SPoA) Service. SPoA would then signpost the person enquiring to the most appropriate service(s) that could help them

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member and officers advised that:

- the Homelessness Strategy was a multi-agency strategy which required the co-operation of all Council services;
- at present the Supporting People (SP) element of the funding utilised to commission homelessness prevention services was 'ring-fenced' for those purposes. However, a recent WG announcement had indicated that from 2019 onwards the SP grant funding would no longer be 'ring-fenced', with consideration being given to developing a "super grant", incorporating the other Tackling Poverty funding streams, and the new Employment grant. This potentially could render elements of the Strategy undeliverable in future. Nevertheless local authorities had a statutory duty to deliver certain services to individuals who were, or at risk of becoming, homeless. No further information was available at present on the details of the recent WG announcement;
- the SP funding for 2018-19 was secure and had been confirmed on a national level, however confirmation was awaited of individual local authority funding allocations which may be subject to change;

- whilst the aim of reducing the number of households residing in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2021 did seem ambitious, officers were confident that with the establishment of the Homelessness Prevention Team, which had brought together specialists within the fields of homelessness and housing support, that this could be achieved;
- whilst it was acknowledged that integrating former offenders into the community was a successful means of reducing reoffending, former prisoners who presented themselves as homeless in Denbighshire would only be entitled to access housing support services if they could satisfy the 'local connection' test as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. As members were keen for this to be highlighted within the Strategy the Head of Community Support Services undertook to seek legal advice on whether reference could be included within the Strategy;
- to date one 'house share' project to meet the needs of young people had been piloted in Denbighshire. This approach had its complexities and was currently being evaluated and compared to schemes trialled in other areas;
- the 'house share' pilot to meet the needs of young people was completely separate to the supported housing schemes for people with learning disabilities and other supported living schemes for which there was a large and growing demand;
- young homeless people (16-17) would not be allocated a 'house share' or supported housing placement where they would share the facility with much older individuals, or vice-versa;
- The "Y Dyfodol" young people's supported housing project in Rhyl was currently being remodelled, to ensure that it appropriately met the needs of young people who were homeless or were threatened with homelessness. This was very much in line with the development of a "Positive Pathway" approach to supporting young people. The remodelled contract would commence in October 2018;
- the Council and its partners were actively, as part of the Strategy's delivery, looking at reducing its usage of bed and breakfast facilities to house homeless families and individuals by up to 50%. One of the reasons behind this was that it was felt that this type of accommodation was not suitable for families and not conducive with family life;
- whilst the majority of the bed and breakfast accommodation currently used by the Council was located along the coastal belt, it did utilise accommodation elsewhere in the county as well. The location would depend on whom it was for, where it was required, and the reasons for placing people and families at the accommodation e.g. fleeing domestic violence etc. The type of B&B accommodation provided would depend on the size of the family unit, it could vary from a room within a hotel/guest house to a chalet on a residential holiday park. The Council would usually pay a lower rate than the tourist rate for the accommodation, however the rates would vary based on the size of the family unit – this approach was similar to the one applied in other local authority areas. The Council's Housing Enforcement Team and its Public Protection Department were responsible for ensuring that the properties commissioned were safe and of the required standards for accommodating people. Members requested that details be shared with them on the average cost per unit of temporary B&B accommodation commissioned by the Council;

- every effort would be made to ensure that temporary accommodation was found for everyone who presented themselves homeless and met the required criteria on the day they presented homeless. Having secured temporary accommodation the Homelessness Prevention Team would then work with the families/individuals, other Council's departments and external organisations to try and secure long-term housing solutions for the individuals concerned;
- the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 stipulated that the Council had 56 days from the day an individual/family approached the authority to notify them that they were at risk of becoming homeless to work with them to prevent them from losing their home, or if necessary, support them to secure suitable and sustainable accommodation. This was twice as long as under the previous Act, and a far more achievable target, which better allowed for early intervention and prevention of crisis point. It was therefore imperative that those who were at risk of losing their homes contacted the local authority as soon as they were aware of the risk e.g. on the day the eviction notice was served to enable officers to work with them to draw up a housing plan and assist them to access help and support;
- the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) application and allocation process seemed to be working well following some initial teething problems. From the Homelessness Prevention Team's perspective the new single application process was far simpler and assisted them with their work of supporting clients to find suitable housing solutions;
- that the Council, due to the need to have more flexibility in relation to the services provided, no longer operated a 'night shelter' for people sleeping rough who wanted to utilise it. Currently it operated 7 day emergency beds which were available to rough sleepers with no local connections and no support packages in place on a 3 day licence;
- the aim now was to develop a 'No Second Night Out' offer which would provide a more holistic approach towards supporting the entire needs of rough sleepers, some of which were extremely complex, to support them to reconnect with society and find housing that met their needs in the long-term. It was eventually hoped that the 'No Second Night Out' work, through the delivery of a variety of prevention work would develop into a 'No First Night Out' approach with a view to ending homelessness in the county. However, officers agreed with members that having no rough sleepers at all may not be achievable, as for some it was a cultural choice to sleep rough;
- the Homelessness Prevention Team dealt with all individuals who were either homeless or at risk of being made homeless, including children. If children were involved the Team would liaise closely with officers in Children's Services;
- an internal officer working group was currently working on the potential impact of the introduction of Universal Credit on Denbighshire residents. This Group was continuing the work of the Tackling Poverty Working Group which had operated during the term of the previous Council. In due course, this Group would in due course report on its work to one of the Boards that would be established to support the delivery of the Council's new Corporate Plan;
- that officers were working closely with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) seeking them, at an early stage, to draw the services and support available

from the Homelessness Prevention Team to the attention of tenants who were at risk of being evicted at an early stage with a view to averting a crisis situation;

- an action plan to deliver the 2018-19 Supporting People/Homelessness Prevention Plan was in the process of being drawn up. The action plan's delivery would be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis by the Homelessness Prevention Planning Group;
- they were of the view that both the Strategy and Prevention Plan were deliverable and sustainable in the long-term, subject to the availability of funding. However, the uncertainty in relation to future SP funding, if included as part of the RSG funding, was a concern hence the reason why the Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) for both the Strategy and Prevention Plan had scored 3 out of the possible 4 stars; and
- under the Strategy every effort would be made to provide a Service through the medium of Welsh to individuals wherever possible, as per the requirements of the county's Welsh Language Standards. Nevertheless, as was acknowledged in the WIA this could place additional pressure on the one fluent Welsh speaking member of staff in the Team, but every effort would be made to accommodate any requests received.

At the conclusion of the discussion members commended the Homelessness Prevention Team on their work and on the Strategy and Prevention Plan, emphasising the importance of educating people on financial matters, particularly financial planning and how to prioritise their spending with a view to reducing the risk of being made homeless. The Committee:

RESOLVED: -

- (i) to confirm that, as part of its consideration, it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessments for both the draft Strategy and the Prevention Plan;*
- (ii) having considered the draft Strategy and Prevention Plan, and subject to the above observations, to recommend to Cabinet that the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 and the Denbighshire Supporting People/Homelessness Prevention Plan 2018-19 be approved and adopted; and*
- (iii) to request that a progress report on the implementation of the Strategy and the delivery of the Prevention Action Plan be presented to the Committee at its meeting in May 2018*

At this juncture (11.15 a.m.) there was a 15 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.30 a.m.

6 POOLED BUDGETS (HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE) - PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Gareth Lloyd Davies declared a personal interest as an employee of the Betsi Cadwaladr University health Board (BCUHB).

The Corporate Director: Communities/Statutory Director of Social Services introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) which outlined the progress made to date in relation to the establishment of pooled budgets for specific health and social care services across the North Wales region. During her introduction the Director reminded members that the establishment of pooled budgets for specific services was a requirement under Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act 2014).

Members were informed that for the purpose of developing pooled budget arrangements the North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB) had established a Regional Pooled Budgets Working Group, made up of specialist technical experts from both the Health Service and local authorities. This Group, chaired by Denbighshire's Director of Social Services, had been tasked with examining the potential benefits of establishing pooled budgets, the operation and management arrangements for pooled budgets, identifying any risks and mitigating actions associated with them and the establishment of governance arrangements etc. Denbighshire was well represented on the Group as its Director of Social Services chaired it and its Section 151 officer, Legal Services Manager, one of its Solicitors and a HR Specialist were members and technical advisors to the Group.

The Committee was advised that the NWRPB and Directors of Social Services across Wales were firmly of the view that pooled budgets should be viewed as a tool to support the journey towards integration not a form of integration in their own right. Whilst progress has been made in developing a regional integration agreement, work was still underway in respect of scoping and developing pooled budgets for specific service areas. A number of pilots were currently being conducted, or had recently concluded, to assess the practicalities of the utilisation of pooled budgets for delivering services in these areas. Whilst considerably more work was required in a number of these areas prior to the introduction of pooled resources, it had become evident that North Wales, similar to all other regions in Wales, would not be in a position to establish a pooled budget for care home provision from April 2018, and therefore would not comply with the Act's requirements. The Welsh Government's (WG) Minister for Social Services and Public Health had been notified of the position and had consequently permitted all Regional Partnership Boards an additional 12 months to comply with this requirement. She had also made it explicitly clear that she would consider intervening if this requirement was not complied with by April 2019. Members were advised that North Wales was ahead of the other regional partnerships in relation to progressing this requirement, but a large amount of detailed work and complex matters required to be worked through prior to an agreement being signed with regards to this particular pooled budget.

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member, Corporate Director and officers:

- requested members to raise directly with them any individual cases on which they had concerns about them being admitted into residential care/nursing care pending future medical treatment without undergoing a proper care/nursing care assessment;
- advised that the law in relation to pooled budgets for care provision did not currently permit the pooled budget to be delegated to individuals for them

to commission their own care package, all packages would require to be commissioned by Social Services/Health Service. Partnership boards were lobbying the Government for the law to be changed in relation to this;

- confirmed that neither Adult Mental Health Services nor Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were included within the scope of the pooled budget requirements of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014. Nevertheless, an integrated Health and Social Services Mental Health Team was already in operation in Denbighshire under the provisions of Section 33 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 which permitted the Health Service and local authorities, where appropriate, to enter into a partnership agreement for the delivery of integrated services. One element of such agreements was the ability to pool funds to deliver an integrated service. A report on pooled budgets in accordance with this legislative provision had been presented to members at the Committee's meeting held on 14 September 2017;
- advised that the objective of the provisions of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 was to bring health and social care services closer together to improve the well-being of citizens;
- informed the Committee that there was an element of nervousness on the part of all local authorities in North Wales and the Health Board in relation to the development of pooled budgets, particularly given the financial situation faced by the Health Board at present and the financial constraints on local authority budgets;
- confirmed that local authorities across Wales had made representations to the WG Minister with regards to the practicalities of establishing pooled budgets for care home provision by 2018 due to the large amount of money that would be required to be paid into this pooled budget. Some were already doubting whether the April 2019 date was achievable, particularly bearing in mind the amount of work required to establish the budget, putting in place the necessary procedures, safeguards and establishing sound governance arrangements;
- emphasised that the NWRPB was not a decision-making body, any proposals formulated by the Board would require to be presented to each local authority and the Health Board's decision making bodies for implementation approval;
- advised they were confident that the conclusions of WIA undertaken in relation to the development of pooled budgets had been an accurate reflection of the proposals long-term sustainability, hence the reason for taking sufficient time and due care in exploring the legal and technical aspects associated with the establishment of pooled funds;
- agreed that the concept of pooled budgets was commendable, as was the aim of the Act - to integrate the delivery of care and well-being services for the benefit of service users and to improve outcomes for them. The greatest challenge would be to turn the vision into reality, particularly building a solid foundation to enable budgets to be effectively pooled and managed;
- advised that the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 stipulated that all local authorities within a local Health Board footprint area were required to work together to improve social care services and the well-being of residents within that area i.e. for North Wales the six local authorities within the Betsi Cadwaladr

University Health Board (BCUHB) area. This did not prohibit local authorities from entering into agreements with other Health Boards if they wanted to do so. Earlier legislation that was still in force permitted local authorities to enter into partnership agreements to pool funds to deliver integrated services. Nevertheless, it was anticipated that establishment of such partnerships would be few and far between;

- acknowledged that the Health Board's footprint area encroached into the county of Powys, with patients from north Powys being referred to hospitals in BCUHB's area. It was confirmed that the Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) and its associated local authorities were no further forward than the NWRPB with the development of pooled budgets;
- confirmed that whilst the NWRPB was an operationally led Board its focus was the patients and citizens of the region. For this reason it sought technical, financial and legal advice from experts in the field. It was trialling a number of pilot projects in relation to pooled budgets with a view to identifying problems and good practice with the ultimate aim of establishing efficient and effective pooled budget arrangements; and
- confirmed that HR experts were involved with the pooled budgets group's work in order to identify HR related matters, such as staff's terms and conditions etc. if a proposal was made to include staffing and staffing costs in any pooled budget arrangements. It was emphasised that pooled budget arrangements did not have to include employment arrangements of staff, integrated working practices was sufficient.

At the conclusion of the discussion members:

RESOLVED:- *subject to the above observations to*

- (i) confirm that they had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment as part of their consideration;*
- (ii) note that North Wales as a region would not achieve the pooling of budgets for Care Homes by April 2018, whilst acknowledging the significant work underway across the region to develop work around integration and pooled budgets;*
- (iii) recognise the resource requirements needed to complete the work involved with integration and pooled budgets within the timescales set out in the Act, including the potential costs and funding sources to deliver them; and*
- (iv) request that a report on the progress made in developing and delivering pooled health and social care budgets and compliance with Section 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting in May 2018.*

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Members' review of the Committee's work programme and provided an update on relevant issues.

During discussion it was:

- Agreed to invite all Lead Members for the Agenda items on the Forward Work Programme for the next Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting taking place on 14 December 2017. Unfortunately, the Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans would not be available but Lead Member, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill would attend in his place.
- Agreed to add Denbighshire's Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 and the Supporting People/Homelessness Prevention Plan 2018/19 update to the Forward Work Programme for 3 May 2018 meeting.
- Provisionally, an update on the North Denbighshire Community Hospital Project in Rhyl be scheduled for 22 January 2018 meeting pending confirmation from BCUHB.
- Appendix 5 – Schools Standards Monitoring Group were looking to update their terms of reference and change of membership. Councillor Emrys Wynne volunteered to sit on the Group as he was a retired teacher and had an interest in the Group's aims.

It was:

RESOLVED *subject to the above to:*

- Confirm the Committee's forward work programme; and*
- Appoint Councillor Emrys Wynne as the Committee's representative on the Council's School Standards Monitoring Group (SSMG)*

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

At this juncture, the Chair, Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones stated she would be unable to attend the next two Strategic Investment Group (SIG) meetings due to being on holiday. She asked for someone to attend in her place. Councillor Joan Butterfield expressed an interest in attending the SIG meetings if she was able to confirm transport arrangements.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m.