

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl on Thursday, 3 May 2018 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Gareth Davies, Pat Jones, Christine Marston, Melvyn Mile, Andrew Thomas, Rhys Thomas and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Cabinet Lead Member – Councillor Bobby Feeley attended for agenda item nos. 4 & 5

Observers – Councillors Brian Blakeley, Meirick Davies, Glenn Swingle, Tony Thomas and Cheryl Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (JG), Head of Community Support Services (PG), Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Officer (LD), Team Manager – Housing Solutions and Supporting People (CO), Principal Manager: Community Support Services (CCN), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

POINTS OF NOTICE

- (i) in the absence of the Chair – Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, the Vice-Chair – Councillor Emrys Wynne took the Chair for the meeting
- (ii) the Scrutiny Coordinator conveyed Councillor Chamberlain-Jones' thanks for all the messages of support and good wishes she had received over the last few weeks and the Committee wished her well and a speedy recovery
- (iii) a warm welcome was extended to all present and special mention was made to Judith Greenhalgh, Chief Executive who was attending her first meeting of the Committee.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Hugh Irving and David Williams and Nicola Stubbins (Corporate Director: Communities)

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declaration of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Well-being and Independence introduced the report (previously circulated) updating members on progress in implementing the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan as requested by the Committee at its meeting in November 2017. She reminded members of the major changes introduced by the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 and focus on the prevention and intervention measures to homelessness, highlighting that the problem had been compounded by continuing austerity and welfare changes including Universal Credit.

Members' attention was drawn to the update and key actions over the next two years as detailed in the appendix to the report which incorporated actions required by the Denbighshire Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Denbighshire Supporting People/Homelessness Prevention Annual Plan with a focus on priority areas as recommended by the Wales Audit Office. The need for the Council to work in partnership with both internal and external organisations in order to achieve those aims was emphasised.

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member, Head of Community Support Services, Team Manager Housing Solutions and Supporting People and the Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Officer –

- confirmed that Supporting People (SP) grant funding to address homelessness was secured for 2018/19 and would continue beyond that – however as part of the proposed future funding changes more emphasis on intervention was being prescribed by the Welsh Government and there was uncertainty about who would distribute the proposed 'super grant' and how it would be allocated
- acknowledged there were issues with other organisations setting up as homeless charities and the Council and partners were working with them in order to offer training on how best to deal with the issues raised and complement the Homelessness Strategy, highlighting the clear pathway for those in need of support – SP projects were well monitored by the Welsh Government and managed within a pathway to determine the best provider for an individual/family
- advised that homelessness prevention services commissioned by SP were based in both rural and town areas and it was agreed to circulate a copy of the Directory of Services to Committee members; reference was also made to the Regional Providers' Forum and work ongoing to establish a multi-agency Homelessness Forum which members would be welcome to attend
- clarified the role of 'Community Navigator' linked to different areas with one Community Navigator part allocated to homelessness with a focus on Universal Credit – offering early intervention advice and support with a presence in Rhyl job centre to signpost individuals where necessary, ensuring issues were dealt with at an early stage to prevent homelessness
- explained that given the number of those precariously housed it was difficult to determine specific figures for homelessness with some individuals not traditionally living on the streets but 'sofa surfing'/staying with friends – there were approximately 60 cases a week presenting to the Council as homeless/at risk of homelessness

- elaborated upon work being undertaken to identify those individuals/families who would be affected by Universal Credit at an early stage and targeting support to prevent homelessness – all homelessness prevention staff, including those in commissioned services, had received Universal Credit awareness training in order to effectively support people in those circumstances and the Council had worked closely with Citizens Advice in that regard
- acknowledged that, in terms of Universal Credit, particular groups may not have the necessary skills or access to IT required and work was ongoing to support those individuals; it was also noted that more working families and young people were being affected and feedback highlighted their preference to use digital and social media for accessing services and managing benefits
- provided assurances regarding the use of particular temporary accommodation but highlighted the difficulties in finding suitable temporary quality accommodation to meet the needs of individuals and there were plans to undertake a feasibility study on temporary accommodation; work continued with providers/landlords to improve the quality of accommodation and prevent evictions
- highlighted the difficulties of engaging with young people to prevent youth homelessness and reported upon a joint feasibility study with Conwy County Borough Council to provide quality accommodation for approximately five youths in each county area subject to Welsh Government funding which would reduce the need for Bed & Breakfast accommodation
- reiterated that individuals could present themselves to the Council as at risk or homeless and would be referred to the SP service and individuals were also referred via other agencies such as Citizens Advice – following the merger of the Supporting People and Housing Solutions Teams the Council's response was far quicker and the service was regularly advertised via Talking Points
- clarified the use of issuing bus passes to individuals which was a reciprocal agreement across neighbouring authority areas.

At the conclusion of the discussion members were keen to receive a further progress report in approximately six months' time in order to continue to monitor progress on implementation of the Plan. Members also felt it would be useful for future reports to include more detail on the specific number of individuals/families identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. It was also hoped that further detail regarding the proposed future funding changes would be available from the Welsh Government. Consequently the Committee –

RESOLVED, *subject to the above observations to –*

- support the delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan, to ensure that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs;*
- note assurances that plans are being developed to mitigate any risks associated with the potential future withdrawal of the protection currently afforded to Supporting People funding for homelessness prevention work, and*

- (c) *requests that a further progress report on delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan be presented to the Committee at its meeting in November 2018.*

At this juncture (11.00 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for a refreshment break.

5 SUPPORT BUDGETS FOR PEOPLE WITH ELIGIBLE CARE AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Well-being and Independence, the Head of Community and Support Services and the Principal Manager: Community Support Services presented the report (previously circulated) regarding changes made to the allocation of funding to individuals eligible for a managed care and support plan in Denbighshire. The changes in processes and approach to the allocation of money had been made in line with the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 in order to increase the choice, voice and control of the individual supported.

The report signalled a move to a new approach with staff having different conversations with citizens usually described as 'what matters' conversations – asking what mattered to them and how they wished to achieve their desired outcomes, rather than what was the matter with them, to determine if they were eligible for care and support by applying the resource wheel. Where total care outcomes could not be achieved support budgets would be provided in one of three ways (1) a self-managed budget (direct payment), (2) a third party managed budget (brokerage), and (3) a local authority managed budget, and it was recognised that many older people would still want a traditional domiciliary care package managed by the local authority. However, where money was allocated via direct payment to individuals it could be used creatively providing the agreed and desired outcome was achieved, e.g. buying in-house services, employing family members, and paying for an air/season ticket for a family member to provide respite care. If direct budgets were effectively used outcomes could be achieved in a better way and could result in cost reductions in some cases. Finally reference was made to system changes required which would affect social care staff, finance officers and other support services and providers which needed to be appropriately managed.

In response to members' questions and comments the Lead Member and officers –

- referred to the potential for a Welsh Language care brokerage system to connect with carers and acknowledged the number of Welsh speakers across the whole county with demand in large towns as well as rural areas
- reported upon safeguards to protect against money mismanagement with a managed account service in-house for direct payments paid on a monthly basis – the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act stated that budgets should be reviewed in the first six months; the care and support plan detailed specific outcomes which would be assessed through the review process and expectations would be explained to individuals and rigorous contract monitoring undertaken. If money was found to be misused there was a mechanism for clawback

- confirmed that direct payments had not been promoted well to date with approximately 90 out of 1500 individuals receiving direct payments; the majority of those receiving direct payments had been younger adults with complex disabilities but there were examples where the needs of older people could be met at home with family support and social care instead of in a residential care home setting thereby providing greater choice for the individual
- advised that options to raise awareness of direct payments were currently being explored and direct payment would be the default position at the outset (if appropriate) for those eligible following assessment and assurance could be taken from the early implementation of suitable systems and procedures in place
- explained the use of the resource wheel as a tool to ensure an asset based approach maximising the contribution of people's own strengths and the support which might be available from within their family and community; isolation was a key issue and Single Point of Access and Talking Point were key to connecting people who were isolated which was also a focus for the Community Navigator
- clarified that if an individual was not eligible for social care and a managed care and support plan it may still be possible in particular circumstances to offer a direct payment for equipment as a preventative measure
- reiterated that there were three support budget options to meet the needs of eligible individuals – if an individual did not have the necessary skills or mental capacity to manage direct payment a third party brokerage system would provide a level of support to that individual and a degree of independence. The third option provided for local authority managed accounts. The most appropriate option for the individual would form part of the initial 'what matters' conversation – all options included a care and support plan with clearly identified outcomes
- agreed to provide an information report on Disabled Facilities Grant/Adaptations Service outlining the Council's process for dealing with grant applications and its performance in processing and delivering grant associated home adaptations (to include information on the Care and Repair Service, uptake for its services and details of the Council's financial contribution towards the service).

Members were keen to review the impact of the changes and progress made in developing, promoting and rolling-out support budgets for eligible people in approximately twelve months' time. It was also suggested that it would be useful to include a service user satisfaction survey and case studies as illustrative examples.

RESOLVED that the Committee –

- confirmed that it had read and understood the changes to be made;*
- has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1 to the report) as part of its consideration;*
- requests that a progress report on Support Budgets for People with Eligible Care and Support Needs be presented to the Committee at its meeting in May 2019, and*

- (d) *requests that an information report on Disabled Facilities Grant/ Adaptations Service be provided to the Committee prior to the next meeting in June 2018.*

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

During the ensuing discussion –

- it was confirmed that reports requested by the Committee under the previous agenda items would be added to the work programme
- members agreed that the special meeting scheduled for 11 May to discuss the findings of the HASCAS report on the Tawelfan Ward at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd be cancelled due to the Health Board not being in a position to send representatives. Due to the size and nature of the report members felt it would be more appropriate to meet on an informal basis to review it and formulate questions in readiness for a future meeting with Health Board representatives. It was agreed to convene the review meeting at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 16 May 2018 in County Hall, Ruthin and whilst it would not be a public meeting all councillors would be invited to attend. Members also noted that the Health Board would be discussing the report's findings on 12 July 2018 and therefore was not expected to be in a position to send representatives to meet with the Committee until after that date
- items on the work programme for the June meeting were reaffirmed but it was noted that sufficient progress may not have been made on the CCTV Partnership in order to provide a meaningful report at that time – the Scrutiny Coordinator would make further enquires and report back to members in that regard
- it was noted that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group had not directed any matters to the Committee during their meeting the previous week, and
- in the absence of the Chair, who was the Committee's representative on the Strategic Investment Group, expressions of interest were sought for a temporary replacement. Councillors Joan Butterfield and Emrys Wynne both expressed an interest and following a tied vote Councillor Wynne waived his interest in favour of Councillor Butterfield.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *subject to the addition of the items agreed during the meeting, the work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved, and*
- (b) *Councillor Joan Butterfield be appointed as the Committee's temporary representative on the Strategic Investment Group pending the Chair's return.*

7 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair reported upon his recent attendance at a meeting of the Welsh in Education Strategic Group at which it was noted that the only representatives

present were from Welsh Medium schools. The need for wider representation from those schools offering Welsh as a second language was highlighted given that they had a special role to play in helping to meet the target increase in Welsh speakers. The success of Ysgol Emmanuel, amongst others, was given particular mention.

RESOLVED that the verbal report be received and noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.