

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1A, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 7 November 2019 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Hugh Irving, Pat Jones, Christine Marston, Peter Scott, David Williams and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair)

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (JG), Head of Communities and Customers (LG), Head of Community Support Services (PG), Lead Officer – Community Housing (GD), Democratic Services Manager (SP) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

Also in attendance:

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service:

Shân Morris – Assistant Chief Officer
Kevin Roberts – Assistance Chief Fire Officer
Pippa Hardwick – Corporate Planning Manager

Clare Budden – Chief Executive, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association

Councillor Bobby Feeley – Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence
Councillor Tony Thomas – Lead Member for Housing and Communities

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gareth Davies, Melvyn Mile and Rhys Thomas.
Rhian Evans – Scrutiny Co-ordinator

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest.

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 16 September 2019 were submitted.

At this juncture, the Chair commended the standard of the minutes and thanked the Committee staff.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 September 2019, be received and confirmed as a correct record.

5 NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

The Assistant Chief Officer, Shân Morris, introduced the presentation – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority – Environment and Sustainability Strategy (previously circulated). Also in attendance from the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) were Kevin Roberts, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager.

This year, the Authority had been asking local authorities about developing a long-term Environment and Sustainable Strategy. What should the Strategy include? What should be at the forefront of the Authority's thinking in terms of planning for the next 20 or 30 years? What ideas does the Scrutiny Committee have for the services that it might provide in the next decades?

During discussion, the following Points were raised:

- It was confirmed that the Authority worked closely with councils' social care departments, health and third sectors to be able to connect with the most vulnerable citizens in the area. 20,000 home checks had been carried out and call outs had been reduced over the last 10 years by 50%. During home checks, issues e.g. suspected safeguarding and domestic abuse were referred to the council.

The Authority were in discussions with Care and Repair. Care and Repair are a charity who help older people in Wales live independently in their own homes. They offer practical help from delivering major modifications for people most in need to offering advice and recommendations to people who need reliable professionals to carry out work. The involvement of Care and Repair would enable one organisation to carry out a number of jobs which would be better for vulnerable individuals and also for the environment.

- The employment of a Moorlands Officer was raised. It was confirmed that Denbighshire would likely be willing to host the post with discussions currently taking place with Natural Resources Wales and the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority regarding funding. To date there was no further information as to when the Moorlands Officer post would be confirmed.
- The Chief Executive explained the Denbighshire Electric First Policy. If a vehicle was due to be replaced, it would be replaced with an electric vehicle wherever possible. Shân Morris confirmed such a Policy was not in place at the Authority. It was agreed to share the Electric First Policy with the Authority to assist.
- The emergency response was organised around 44 fire stations located across North Wales with a fleet of 54 fire engines and 35 other appliances including environmental protection units, aerial ladder platforms, narrow access vehicles, foam carriers, boats, technical rescue and incident

command units. It also maintained a “white” fleet of over 100 vehicles for non-emergency work. The “white” fleet of vehicles could be, in time, replaced with electric vehicles but the same could not be done with the “red” vehicles.

- 71% of the Authority’s budget was for employee costs. 20% non-pay costs. 10% on capital financing and the equivalent of 1% being received by way of income.
- How climate change might affect resources – a risk assessment was yet to be carried out as to how climate change might affect resources. A pilot scheme was due to commence to measure the carbon footprint. Consultants, Etha, were aware of the issues and difficulties.

Councillor Joan Butterfield explained about a newly formed Denbighshire panel, the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group. Assistant Chief Officer Morris requested being sighted on the Group’s activities and initiatives. There was a possibility information could be shared through the Public Services Board meetings.

- No funding was available to the Authority to provide Carbon Monoxide monitors but Care and Repair were able to provide them to vulnerable individuals.
- In respect of high-rise buildings, it was confirmed that aerial ladder platforms were located within areas of North Wales so they would be able to attend any incident within 30 minutes. The “Stay Put Policy” had worked well for many years but had not worked in the Grenville tower block due to the cladding and windows. Work was continually ongoing with Building Managers and evacuation plans were in place.

At this juncture, the Committee thanked the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority for all the work they carried out.

RESOLVED that:

- *The Partnership Scrutiny Committee note the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority’s Environment and Sustainability Strategy*
- *The North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority be requested to consider the Moorland Officer post with Natural Resources Wales and Denbighshire County Council*
- *Corporate Activity – Electric First Policy to be shared with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority*
- *Model climate change and emergency response work information to be shared with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.*

6 SUPPORT BUDGETS FOR PEOPLE WITH ELIGIBLE CARE AND SUPPORT NEEDS

The Lead Member for Well-being and Independence, Councillor Bobby Feeley, introduced the Support Budgets for People with Eligible Care and Support Needs

report (previously circulated) to provide assurance of delivery against the Council's corporate priority relating to building resilient communities and fulfilment of the objectives of the Social Services and Well-being (SSWB) Act 2014.

Support budgets formed part of a fundamental shift in social care policy and practice requiring a significant change to adult social care systems, processes, culture and practice.

Support budgets enabled citizens to understand the cost of their care, allowing them to work with local authorities to agree the effective and efficient use of resources.

Having agreed eligible outcomes, the assessor and citizen apply the Resource Wheel; a process by which they agree what care and support was available through the assets available to them e.g. family, church, friends, community groups and voluntary organisations.

During in-depth discussions, the following points were raised:

- It was confirmed that each situation was assessed on its own merit.
- Monitoring of the managed care plan would be carried out by regular reviews.
- With regards to the system being more cost effective, the Head of Community Support Services, explained that the budgets were not currently separated, but he would contact finance to ascertain if a breakdown could be facilitated.
- Community navigators were a link in to social services and there was also an expectation of Denbighshire staff working within the community to channel through and identify any persons requiring assistance.
- Denbighshire have a good working relationship with CAB who sub-contract to the Benefit Advice Shop.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, Partnerships Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the progress being made in developing, promoting and rolling-out support budgets for people eligible to receive them.

At this juncture (11.30 a.m.) there was a 10 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.40 a.m.

7 SINGLE ACCESS ROUTE TO HOUSING (SARTH)

The Lead Member for Housing and Communities introduced the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) report (previously circulated) to detail the operation of SARTH which dealt with how applications for social housing were managed.

SARTH is the "Single Access Route to Housing" which was the name given to the Common Housing Allocations Policy between Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy Councils together with the Housing Associations (Registered Social Landlords – RSLs) that operate in these counties.

The Policy ensured that social housing allocations were delivered in accordance with housing legislation (Housing Act 1996, Housing (Wales) 2014) and the Code of Guidance for the Allocation of Accommodation. This was necessary to mitigate the risk of legal challenge but also to ensure that homes were allocated to those most in need.

The overall operation of the policy was monitored by a Regional Steering Group made up of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire Councils and Registered Social Landlords.

Whilst the policy was a joint partnership between the three counties, the delivery of the common housing register was individual to each county. In Denbighshire there was one single register for all social housing let by the council and the six RSLs in operation within Denbighshire.

With regards to the operational delivery of the Denbighshire common register, a decision was made in September 2016 to partner with Flintshire County Council as they were already delivering the service and had been through the significant change process to ensure smooth implementation and operation of the service.

The service involved handling over 300 calls per week. Cases were often referred to other services such as Homeless Prevention, Housing Enforcement, Tai Teg and also support services. Call handling and written correspondence were all Denbighshire branded and customers were not aware of where the staff were located.

The cost of delivering the partnership was less than the cost to deliver the service alone. The annual cost to Denbighshire was currently £52k.

The operation and performance of the partnership agreement with Flintshire was monitored to ensure service standards were delivered and maintained including call answering performance.

The Chief Executive of Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, Clare Budden confirmed that accommodation was in short supply and there was especially a lack of accommodation for young single people. Clwyd Alyn had received regeneration funding from the Welsh Government and were in the process of emptying homes in Edward Henry Street, Rhyl, in readiness for demolition and new properties to be built.

A brief summary of the projects Clwyd Alyn had recently carried out in different areas was given to members.

It was confirmed that the housing application was a telephone based service which was an easier process for applicants. The telephone number for SARTH was answered by people who were technical experts and, therefore, this was the best number for people to speak to regarding options for housing.

If anyone was interested in shared ownership Tai Teg was the organisation to contact. The SARTH telephone line would ask all the relevant questions to

ascertain whether the applicant was interested in renting a property or a shared ownership and they would then be signposted to the best person/organisation to assist them.

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee thanked the officers and especially the Chief Executive of Clwyd Alyn Housing Association for attending the meeting and providing such a lot of worthwhile information.

RESOLVED that the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

19 December 2019 – Lead Member, Councillor Bobby Feeley to be invited to attend.

All present confirmed the representatives on the Service Challenge Groups.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) *The forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved*
- (ii) *The Partnership Scrutiny Committee confirmed the representatives on the Service Challenge Groups*

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Peter Scott confirmed he had attended a SSMG meeting at St. Brigid's School in Denbigh which had gone very well.

The meeting concluded at 12:50 p.m.