

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held remotely on Thursday, 10 September 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Hugh Irving, Pat Jones, Melvyn Mile, Peter Scott, Rhys Thomas and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Brian Jones – Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment
Councillor Bobby Feeley – Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence
Councillor Tony Thomas – Lead Member for Housing and Communities

Observers:

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies and Councillor Gwyneth Kensler.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Head of Customers, Communications & Marketing (LG), Head of Highways, Facilities and Environmental Services (TW), Lead Officer - Corporate Property & Housing Stock (DL), Principal Manager - Support Services (AL), Lead Officer - Community Housing (GD), Waste & Recycling Manager (TD), Democratic Services Manager (SP), Scrutiny Co-Ordinator (RE), Democratic Services Officer (KE) and Committee Administrator (SJ).

The Local Democracy Reporter was also in remote attendance to observe proceedings. A representative from Audit Wales had also been invited to attend.

POINT OF NOTICE

Due to the current restrictions on travel and requirement for social distancing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic the meeting was held remotely by video conference and was not open to the general public. All members had been given the opportunity to attend as observers and the Local Democracy Reporter had also been invited to observe.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Christine Marston and Councillor David Williams.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters were received.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 13 February 2020 were submitted.

Resolved: - that the minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 February 2020 be received and approved as a true and correct record.

5 INFRASTRUCTURE - HOUSING RECOVERY THEME

The Lead Member for Housing & Communities introduced members to the report and appendices (previously circulated) providing members with information on the post Covid-19 recovery plan for Infrastructure- Housing Recovery Priority.

The Head of Communities and Customer Services (HCCS) guided members through the report and the recovery themes. Reference was made to the two appendices, the first being the drafted and agreed Housing Recovery theme agreed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet in May 2020 with the second being an update to work completed.

The HCCS directed members to appendix 2 which illustrated the completed actions and an update to the actions within appendix 1.

Confirmation was provided to members that work to reduce the backlog of non-urgent house repairs had begun in August. Due to limited visits during lockdown the backlog of work had increased. Focus to work through backlog and get back on track was ongoing.

Members heard that a delegated decision to temporarily change the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) process had been agreed, with a review at the end of October scheduled. The up to date total number of households that had been matched to accommodation was 40 slightly higher than what was stated in the report.

Although rent arrears had risen, officers stated communication with residents and the inclusion of Citizens Advice to assist and support officers was provided. It was confirmed along with Denbighshire; the Welsh Government had worked closely with residents at risk of rent arrears.

Communication with tenants had proven vital to the recovery plan, with more than 3000 support calls made to vulnerable tenants. The use of social media to communicate messages and offer support had proved valuable. Confirmation that a

pilot scheme had been approved to open a community room within Dolwen, Denbigh.

Members thanked the HCCS for the detailed introduction through the report. During the Committee's discussions the Lead Member and Officers:

- Confirmed work had continued with tenants and officers were working hard to resolve any issues tenants have if unable to move to alternative accommodation. Support has been offered to tenants especially when complaints of anti-social behaviour were received.
- Confirmation was provided that a delay in receiving payments from Universal Credit had been observed and not from the tenant. The pandemic had caused a considerable impact on Universal Credit thus in turn causing issues for residents. It was expressed the aspiration was to enable residents to develop skills and gain employment.
- Members supported the work that was ongoing with vulnerable tenants. It was felt this aspect of the recovery was important.
- Emphasis to the number of residents in the county with no access to online facilities was made. Members heard that consideration and learning opportunities to learn and develop online skills would have to be provided.
- Confirmation that separate work had been completed to address members' concerns regarding homelessness in the authority.
- Concerns that older residents in the community may not have access to social media. The use of the telephone had proved invaluable to these residents.
- The Single Access Route to Housing form remained the same.
- Officers reassured members that contractors provided identification when requesting permission to enter properties.

The Chair thanked officers and Lead Members for the report and the committee;

RESOLVED: - subject to the above observations –

- (i) That it had read, understood and taken account of the activities being pursued in relation to Council Housing-Related services' recovery from the first lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and***
- (ii) requested that a report, outlining the effects of COVID-19 on homelessness in the county along with the Council's recovery plans in relation to addressing homelessness issues, be presented to the Committee in the near future.***

At this juncture (11.10 a.m.) there was a 10 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.20 a.m.

6 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE - RECOVERY THEME

The Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress of the Community Resilience Recovery theme as set out in the Denbighshire County Council Coronavirus Response: Planning for Recovery' report.

Members were guided through the report with particular reference made to the four objectives as outlined in section 2 of the covering report.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members felt the proactive calling had been very well received and had also proved beneficial to Councillors making the contact with residents.
- Members had been informed the formal befriending scheme had concluded, any future plans for the scheme would have to include resources and guidance.

Members were pleased with the work that had been done to date and wanted to thank officers and the Lead Member for the continued support for members and local residents.

It was therefore;

RESOLVED: - subject to the above observations to support the recovery plan, as outlined in Appendix A to the report.

7 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES

The Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) which outlined a proposal to engage in a joint procurement process with Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) to manage Household Waste Recycling Centres in both counties.

Members were informed that both Denbighshire County Council (DCC) and CCBC had been keen to progress with the proposal with CCBC to lead on the programme. Members heard of some of the potential benefits to both residents and businesses these included enabling residents to use the closest home waste recycling centre (HWRC) regardless of which county it was in, a consistent approach with neighbouring authorities and financial benefits from economies of scale including increased tendering interest from the private waste sector companies.

Head of Highways, Facilities and Environmental Services (HHFES) informed members to enable the joint working it would require a change to the Council's current policies.

Members were guided to point 4.5 of the covering report which outlined the new cost element to the policy.

The new booking system currently in use due to the Covid-19 pandemic had proved to work well, the intention to continue this would assist the authorities to look at the

number of residents using cross border HWRCs. The HHFES explained the intention to open a re-use shop to allow items that can be used again to be sold to members of the public.

During discussions the following points were raised –

- The enforcement team took fly tipping very serious. Within Denbighshire all allegations were investigated. Officers stated as an authority fly tipping was not major a concern as in some other authorities. It was felt that the joint working approach would not lead to an increase in fly tipping in the authority.
- The new proposal would have no effect on the plans for the waste and recycling facilities proposed for Denbigh.
- The new proposals would generate a saving for the authority. The exact amount could not be predicted.
- Confirmation was provided that all except one fixed penalty fine for fly tipping have been recovered.
- The proposal for a re-use shop had been seen favourably and Officers spoke highly of the proposal. The re use shop was in the early stages of the tender process, with all options being looked into.
- The contract between Denbighshire and Conwy would be drawn up with the Council' Legal Department to ensure any difficulties or obstacles faced in Denbighshire could easily be resolved or as a last resort the Council could leave the contract.
- Costs for each authority would be apportioned fairly.
- Officers reassured members that the new proposal would provide residents with more options to get rid of any household waste.

The Chair thanked officers for the detailed report and comments to members and observer questions.

The Committee;

RESOLVED: -

- (i) subject to the above observations, to support the principle of collaborating with Conwy County Borough Council to procure a joint contract for managing Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in both counties, including the proposal to align HWRC policies and for consistent charges to be applied across all sites for certain non-household items; and***
- (ii) confirmed that, as part of its consideration, it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1).***

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

During the ensuing discussion –

- It was noted that this was the first meeting due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The agenda had included the recovery themes and the urgent report on Household Waste Recycling Centre.
- Members agreed for the next meeting to include reports on North Wales Growth Bid, Homelessness effects of Covid-19 and Recovery Plans, The Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2021 and the Annual Report on Adult Safeguarding 2019/20.
- It was agreed to keep the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board items on the Forward Work Programme for a future date.
- The Scrutiny Co-Ordinator confirmed to members the Chairs and Vice-Chairs were meeting 10 September and 12 October to discuss proposals.

RESOLVED, that the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.