

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in remotely via Video Conferencing on Thursday, 22 October 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Mabon ap Gwynfor, Brian Blakeley, Rachel Flynn, Tina Jones, Merfyn Parry, Andrew Thomas, Graham Timms (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Williams and Huw Williams (Chair)

Education Co-opted Members Kathleen Jones and Neil Roberts attended for business item 5.

Councillor Huw Hilditch Roberts Lead Member for Education and Children's Services was present for item 5.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill Lead member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets was present for item 6.

Councillor Tony Thomas lead member for Housing and Communities was present for item 7.

Observers – Councillors Meirick Lloyd Davies, Bobby Feeley, Gwyneth Kensler and Emrys Wynne

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economy & Public Realm (GB), Corporate Director: communities (NS), Interim Head of Education (GD), Principal Manager – School Support (JC), Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) (GW), Community Benefits Manager (KB); Framework Manager (TS), the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS), the Countryside and Heritage Services Manager Denbighshire (HR) Huw Rees, the Business Information Team Manager (CB), Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE) and Committee Administrator (RhTJ).

The Local Democracy Reporter and a representative from Audit Wales were also in remote attendance to observe proceedings.

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. The Local Democracy Reporter and a representative from Audit Wales had also been invited to observe.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anton Sampson and Glenn Swingler.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, 'Minutes' as a member of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

The following members declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, 'Impact of Ruthin Primary Area Review':

Councillor Huw O Williams – parent of a pupil attending one of the schools
Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies – School Governor Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog
Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts – Parent and School Governor Ysgol Pen Barras
Councillor Merfyn Parry – School Governor Ysgol Bryn Clwyd and Ysgol Gellifor
Co-opted Member Neil Roberts – School Governor Ysgol Borthyn
Councillor Cheryl Williams – School Governor Christ the Word School
Councillor Emrys Wynne – School Governor Ysgol Brynhyfryd & Ysgol Borthyn
Councillor Martyn Holland – School Governor Ysgol Bro Fammau
Councillor Andrew Thomas – governor at one of the County's schools
Councillor Tina Jones – governor at Ysgol Melyd
Councillor Graham Timms – governor at Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Review of Cabinet Decision Relating to the Disposal of Land Adjacent to Ysgol Pendref, Denbigh: the Chair invited the Vice-Chair to address the Committee in relation to Cabinet's response to the Committee's recommendations following its examination of the above decision. Whilst Cabinet had debated the Committee's recommendations in some detail and half the Cabinet members had supported the Committee's recommendations the Executive had, on the Chair's casting vote, confirmed its original decision. The Committee's Vice-Chair registered his disappointment with the outcome, and questioned whether Scrutiny could ever persuade Cabinet to review their decisions.

Executive members in attendance at the present meeting advised that in their view Scrutiny had effectively held decision-makers to account and generated constructive debate. A number of matters had been aired which were likely to be considered when determining future planning policy. The use of the casting vote had highlighted that the Council's Cabinet was balanced, and comprised members of different viewpoints.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 September 2020 were submitted.

Matters Arising -

- The Scrutiny Officer informed the committee that a Mooreland officer had been appointed however the fire service were not jointly funding the post. Members expressed their disappointment with the lack of funding.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

Resolved: - that the minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 September 2020 be received and approved as a true and correct record

5 IMPACT OF RUTHIN PRIMARY REVIEW

Interim Head of Education, Geraint Davies (GD), Principal Manager – School Support, James Curran (JC) were in attendance for the item.

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts introduced the report providing information regarding the impact of the Ruthin Primary review against the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. Denbighshire's Cabinet agreed in November 2012 to commence informal consultation regarding a review of Primary Provision in the Ruthin area. It was agreed that the area review would focus on the following objectives; Ensuring the sustainability of high quality education provision; improving the quality of school buildings and facilities and providing the right number of places, of the right type in the right location. Cabinet reviewed the findings of the informal consultation and made six recommendations which would impact on school provision in the area.

In essence of the report the majority was a good one, the area had intensive investment, and there were matters such as Ysgol Pentrecelyn and Ysgol Llanbedr and the consultation. The experience gained from the consultation had been beneficial. Children were being educated in good environments and there had been good investment in the Ruthin area. There has also been a healthy increase with Welsh speakers in the area.

GD agreed with Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts, it was also added that the investment made to the schools made the whole process of education easier for teachers and pupils. It was also stated that there had been an unforeseen circumstance of the investment as the larger builds had made keeping COVID compliant much easier.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- The chair informed the committee that following the case to keep Ysgol Llanbedr open, the number of pupils had been increasing.
- Members queried whether there was a follow up impact meant to be carried out since the school was closed to see the impact on the community and the economy, and if anything had been carried out. Officers responded an information report was meant to be circulated which was an exercise to see the impact of what happened with the school, they informed the member that can get the discover the report and resend to the local member. The local member there had been a report promised which would assess the community and economic impact in the Rhyl area. Officer responded stating they would review past minutes to see what was discussed and carry out the work.

- Members highlighted the impact on the Welsh language in the area, had there been an increase with the Welsh language. There had been an increase with children attending Welsh schools and also the Welsh language offer had increased.
- The committee enquired whether the new builds were economically viable and green as all the new schools were built with large open spaces. There were also concerns with safety of the new schools. The wide open spaces has made it easier with the current perspective. It's easier to manage the movement of children in an open space, there were no negative comments received from school Governors with large spaces. The wellbeing aspect can be looked at, schools felt more secure with fobs to gain access to the schools and having fencing surrounding schools.
- The new Ysgol Pen Barras and Rhos Street School were mentioned, the outside space needed to be fair and balanced between two schools, the professionals involved did not work it out correctly and after substantial lobbying from governors and parents the change would be implemented.

Proposed by Councillor Graham Timms, seconded by Councillor Merfyn Parry.

Vote taken: 10 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention.

The Committee:

Resolved: having considered the findings in the report and presented during the discussion –

- (i) to receive the information on the impact of the Ruthin Primary Area Review as assessed against the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;***
- (ii) to confirm that, as part of its consideration, it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1);***
- (iii) that an information report be prepared for circulation to members on the economic impact on Rhewl following the closure of the school as part of the Ruthin primary area review;***
- (iv) that information be provided to members detailing the statistics of the Welsh Language Survey undertaken across Denbighshire recently; and***
- (v) that members' gratitude be conveyed to all school based, Education Service, and other Council Services' staff for their efforts and commitment in securing the delivery of education and support to the county's pupils throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.***

6 COMMUNITY BENEFITS POLICY

Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets Julian Thompson-Hill, the Community Benefits Manager Karen Bellis and the Framework Manager Tania Silva were all in attendance for the item.

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets presented the report (previously circulated) for

the committee to consider and comment on the proposed Community Benefits (CB) policy and its alignment with the Council's corporate plans and priorities.

June 2019 the DCC Programme Board for Young People and Housing approved the creation of the Community Benefits Hub (CB Hub), along with the inclusion of community benefits in all relevant contracts. The Hub would provide support, and enable Services to include CBs in contracts at the earliest opportunity.

The commissioning cycle process is central to achieving best value and outcomes for DCC spend and it is to be expected that by applying a CB approach at an early stage this would go toward increasing value for DCC spend. A CB Hub Officer was appointed in February 2020 and CB Hub manager appointed in March. DCC Community Benefits Policy would support the work and actions of the CB Hub in achieving intended outcomes and targets.

The Council spent £116m in 2017/18 so with a modest 1% CB return this could be generate £1.16m in new benefit per annum. This Policy would support the work of the CB Hub, and the council officers it supports, to access such funding and benefits to reinforce our corporate plan priorities that would help our communities to become more independent and resilient. The Council delivers its services directly through its own workforce, and through private and third sector organisations. The Council procures a wide range of goods, services and works from over 4,500 suppliers, service providers and contractors.

The CB Policy would provide a framework for internal and external stakeholders to be active in continued and developing engagement allowing us to monitor and evaluate, learn lessons, measure impact, and design fit for purpose CB planning the future. Policy would also support the CB Hub to track, monitor and report on community benefit outcomes across the council and become a means of assessing the strength, vitality and performance for the Corporate Plan 2017-2022. This in turn would use to formulate strategies for improvements and influence policy decisions. There could be opportunities to involve local communities in the delivery of community benefits.

The Hub was doing what the future generation act and ensuring that there was not only a financial gain from the contractors but also to have a long term impact.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- The committee queried whether the officers for the CB would work closely with elected members, officers responded stating they would be having correspondence with local members as they had the best communication with local people and matters.
- The committee queried whether wording within the policy could be changed from 'limiting pollution' to 'preventing pollution' officers ensured this could be done.
- Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer – endorsed the work which was carried out by both Officers Tania Silva and Karen Bellis.

Proposed by Councillor Graham Timms, seconded by Councillor Brian Jones.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

The Committee:

Resolved: - having considered the policy –

- (i) to support its aims and objectives;***
- (ii) to confirm that, as part of its consideration, it had read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 2); and***
- (iii) recommended that on page 4 of the policy, under the ‘Environmental Sustainability Initiatives’ section that the words “limiting pollution” be replaced by “limiting pollution where possible”.***

7 NORTH EAST WALES ARCHIVES AND RUTHIN GAOL

The lead member for Housing and Communities Tony Thomas, the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation, Alan Smith, the Countryside and Heritage Services Manager Denbighshire Huw Rees and the Business Information Team Manager Craig Berry were all in attendance for the item.

Councillor Tony Thomas - Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and Communities presented the report (previously circulated). This follows a report presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee during October 2019, where the plans were outlined for North East Wales Archives (NEWA) and the possible move to Mold in 2025 (subject to National Lottery Heritage Funding). During this meeting, the Committee requested an update during 2020 on the utilisation of the potential vacated space at Ruthin Gaol.

A working group was established earlier this year to develop plans for the long-term use of Ruthin Gaol. The working group consisted of Local Members, selected key officers and a representative from Ruthin Town Council. The Working Group has developed exciting and innovative plans for expanding the heritage attraction at the Gaol, so that the vacated space was used to develop the following, Development of immersive Cell Experiences. Alan Smith had put a £65k reserve in place with work with the old gaol.

The plans for the Gaol, were in line with the budget allocated which was £65k, this budget would be used whether the Archives would move. Thanks for some funding from Craig’s team who funded plans for some whole site offers, this would impact on 46 Clwyd Street.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- The committee queried why the item was being discussed prior to the public consultation being carried out and completed, responding officers clarified that public engagement was required for the next stage of the bid. The consolation would be promoted through social media to ensure there was adequate public engagement.

- The archive presence at the Gaol whether the archives would move was highlighted, members sought clarification with what the link would entail. There would be a computer link, alongside a physical presence during the week. The physical presence would keep a presence at the gaol to cover local demand. However the details were yet to be finalised.
- The partnership between Flintshire County Council and Denbighshire's County Council's archive services was questioned and whether the NEWA were to fail would the partnership continue. The committee were informed that the partnership was informal, and both Councils could leave however the partnership was working well.
- The proposals for the Gaol were they dependant on the Archives leaving the site. Officers clarified that whether the Archives were not to move out it would be very difficult to carry out any works, the plans which were presented were totally reliant if archives were to move out.
- The differences between DCC and FCC's Welsh language policies were raised, member were seeking assurance to which policy would be adopted if the NEWA was built. The committee were assured that it would be the DCC policy which would be adopted.

Vote taken: 6 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions.

Having considered the report on the North East Wales Archive Service and Ruthin Gaol the Committee:

Resolved:

- (i) to note the progress made to date and support the proposals for the future use of Ruthin Gaol;***
- (ii) to register concerns that no contingency plans currently existed for the Archives Service or the heritage offer at Ruthin Gaol if the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for funding to develop a Hub in Mold for the North East Wales Archives Service was unsuccessful; and***
- (iii) that the results of the current North East Wales Archives Service Access Consultation be circulated to members for information.***

8 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.

Discussion focused on the following -

- The Flood Management Responsibilities in Denbighshire NRW have confirmed they are able to attend the meeting, awaiting confirmation if Dwr Cymru could attend, members were happy for the item to be discussed at the next meeting.
- The Rhyl Regeneration Programme and the Car Park Charging Policy and Residents' Parking Schemes were still scheduled for the January meeting,

the Planning Compliance Charter was scheduled for May, and this was to allow 6 months to pass to see whether the charter was effective.

- Waste Remodelling was queried and whether members were happy to include the item on the agenda for January, members suggested an additional meeting be organised in February 2021 to discuss the item.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reminded members of the scrutiny proposal form (Appendix 2 previously circulated) and advised that any proposals should be sent to her directly, so these could be considered by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group for inclusion on the forward work programme.

Agreement on the recommendation was by consensus. No formal vote was taken. All members indicated they were in favour of the recommendation, no one indicated they were against it and no one indicated they wanted to abstain.

Resolved: having considered the information provided, and subject to the above observations and suggestions–

- (i) to approve the Committee's forward work programme; and***
- (ii) that an additional meeting be arranged for early February 2021 to consider matters relating to the Waste Service Remodelling Project***

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

No feedback received.

The meeting concluded at 13:17.