

CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board held by video conference on Monday, 16 November 2020 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Siân Williams (Chair) – Natural Resources Wales
Judith Greenhalgh (Vice Chair) – Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Goronwy Edwards (substitute for Councillor Sam Rowlands) – Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Julian Thompson (substitute for Councillor Hugh Evans) – Denbighshire County Council
Gareth Evans (substitute for Bethan Jones) – Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Wendy Jones – Community and Voluntary Support Conwy
Lisa Williams – Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council
Richard Firth – Public Health Wales
Jason Devonport – North Wales Police
Vicky Poole – Welsh Government Representative
Councillor Carol Marubbi – Conwy Town and Community Council Representative
Councillor Gordon Hughes – Denbighshire Town, Community and City Council Representative
Helen MacArthur – North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Emma Lea – Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Helen Millband – Natural Resources Wales
David Powell – Natural Resources Wales

ALSO PRESENT

Nicola Kneale – Denbighshire County Council
Fran Lewis – Conwy County Borough Council
Shannon Richardson – Denbighshire County Council
Steve Price – Democratic Services Manager Denbighshire County Council
Kath Jones – Committee Administrator Denbighshire County Council
Sandra Williams – Translator/Interpreter

OBSERVERS

Councillor Meirick Davies (Denbighshire County Council) and David Wilson (Audit Wales)
Jez Hemming – Local Democracy Reporter (Press)

1 APOLOGIES

Bethan Jones – Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Councillor Hugh Evans – Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Sam Rowlands – Conwy County Borough Council

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board meeting held on 27 July 2020 were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 9, Item 5 Offers of Support: PSB’s Civic Mission, Glyndwr University – the Chair reported on her discussions with Nina Ruddle, Glyndwr University regarding their offer to facilitate a workshop to review the PSB’s priorities and how best to take them forward. Flintshire and Wrexham PSBs had participated in a similar workshop which had been well received. The Board considered that there would be merit in taking up the offer and that a separate workshop session be arranged for that purpose. An informal meeting of the Board had been scheduled for 25 January 2021 and it was agreed to use that date for the workshop session if possible. The Chair agreed to contact Nina Ruddle, Glyndwr University to ascertain their availability to facilitate the workshop on 25 January 2021.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2021 be received and approved as a correct record, and*
- (b) *the Chair contact Glyndwr University with a view to them facilitating a workshop session for the Board on 25 January 2021.*

3 UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE PRIORITY

A report was submitted (previously circulated) from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) providing an update on progress and a review of the five work areas in the Environmental Resilience priority by the Supporting Environmental Resilience Sub-Group as requested by the PSB in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and also outlined two projects submitted to the NRW Strategic Allocating Funding grant process.

Helen Millband reported upon the findings of the review together with the Sub-Group’s recommendations. Whilst all five areas of work were still considered relevant it was recommended that the following projects be paused due to capacity or during a pandemic being the wrong time (1) working with communities to develop environmental pledges and green changes, (2) looking at the procurement process to maximise community benefits from building developments, and (3) working with planning teams to ensure environmental issues were looked at when planning new developments. It was also recommended that one new priority be developed about green and blue spaces for communities and discussion around home working and travel had identified two new sub actions under the reduction of carbon action. A summary of those work areas had been detailed in the report. Project ideas for spending NRW £25k had also been discussed by the Sub-Group and two projects had been taken forward after the meeting relating to (1) Coastal electric bike empowerment programme (12k), and (2) Glan Morfa Community Woodland (13k).

During debate the capacity issues were acknowledged but there was some reluctance for the identified priorities to be paused, particularly given the environmental benefits which had been inadvertently created by the pandemic and the continuing momentum and public enthusiasm in that regard. Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill reported that Denbighshire had recently changed its constitution to

ensure all decisions must have regard to the environmental impact and were also shortly to consider their community benefits policy and he was concerned that pausing those priorities may prove counterproductive. That view was shared by Councillor Gronowy Edwards given that much work had been carried out in engaging with residents and town/community councils within Conwy and there was an appetite from communities to be involved which he felt should be further developed. By way of further explanation Helen Millband reported that the feeling of the Sub-Group had been that capacity was limited and they had also questioned whether it was appropriate to drive forward those environmental pledges when communities were dealing with many other issues. However the views of the Board would be reported back to the Sub-Group. Helen MacArthur also acknowledged the hard work carried out in terms of community engagement but in the event those priorities were to be paused she highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of that action and the likely timescales to progress them in the future. Judith Greenhalgh referred to the wealth of community engagement arising from the current consultation on Denbighshire's Climate and Ecological Strategy and whilst statutory organisations may be struggling for capacity the communities were very receptive and she felt the PSB could capture public imagination on this issue.

The Board also discussed the proposed new priority around green and blue spaces. Helen Millband elaborated upon the opportunity to build on the renewed enthusiasm for the local environment during the first lockdown and their potential to help recovery and links to develop in relation to the "Supporting Good Mental Well-being for all ages" priority. She also reported further on the two projects which had been taken forward and links with the work as part of the area statements NRW were working on. There was much support for the new priority and benefits to communities but it was also noted that there may be a resource impact for maintaining outdoor areas and maximising their use for the benefit of all. The Chair reminded the Board of the links between the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and the Environment Act and welcomed the partner organisations involvement in those online engagement sessions on the area statements work facilitated by NRW. Details of those sessions would be circulated following the meeting.

In bringing the debate to a close the Chair summed up the Board's views that, rather than pausing the priority areas immediately, some connection needed to be made with communities with a view to building on the positive engagement and progress that had already been made. It was agreed that some work be carried out as to how best to continue to engage with communities and harness that enthusiasm, whether it be through community pledges or the new priority green and blue spaces, and to work with those that had an appetite for environmental change and some capacity at present, with a view to delivering positive changes within their areas, rather than the onus being on statutory organisations to deliver it for them.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the progress report and review carried out by the Supporting Environmental Resilience Sub-Group be received and noted;*
- (b) *the current priorities be revisited and some community work be carried out with a view to progressing some of those work areas;*

- (c) *a new priority be developed recognising the importance of local green and blue space for communities;*
- (d) *two additional sub-work actions about PSB partners' staff working practices and establishing links with the transport and regional energy strategy are relevant, and*
- (e) *the suggested shared responsibility for reporting and monitoring actions be agreed across the PSB partners.*

4 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PRIORITY - DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Nicola Kneale submitted the report (previously circulated) detailing the opportunities for improving digital infrastructure in Conwy and Denbighshire following the Board's agreement at their meeting in July that a focus was needed on digital exclusion and digital skills. [A report on digital skills was proposed for a future meeting.]

Members were advised of the current position in relation to digital connectivity and the support in place for improving digital infrastructure. Both counties had many rural areas with a lot of "white" premises (properties receiving less than 30Mbps). BT Openreach had a plan for rolling out full fibre connections across some parts of the counties by June 2022 but many properties would not be covered. Funding from the Rural Gigabite Voucher scheme was available for those not on the rollout scheme and another government scheme LFFN (Local Full Fibre Networks) would roll out full fibre connections to public buildings currently to March 2021 (although there may be some slippage). However even after those planned rollouts many rural areas would still have poor connectivity. Denbighshire had invested in a Digital Officer (February 2020 – March 2021) and Conwy planned to appoint a Digital Officer (January – December 2021) with slightly different approaches to address the issue. An analysis of the digital infrastructure had led to a number of recommendations to effect improvement which included a prioritisation process for communities; longer term funding for the Digital Officer posts, and a joint working approach given the number of "white" premises bordering the counties.

The Board stressed the importance of good connectivity which had become even more apparent during the pandemic with more people working from home and businesses moving some or all of their operations online, and which also provided a lifeline for many rural communities. Councillor Gronow Edwards suggested a dialogue be established with BT Openreach given the fragmented approach undertaken in order to provide an opportunity for them to work together on a cohesive approach to better address the needs of communities. The recommendation to work with Welsh Government to agree a definition of 'rural communities' with BT was also supported in order to prioritise those communities most lacking connectivity. Judith Greenhalgh confirmed that digital connectivity had been recognised by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) as a high priority. To ensure no duplication of work she suggested an update be sought from the NWEAB in that regard to enable the PSB to ascertain how they could best supplement those work plans. It was agreed to invite Alwen Williams from the NWEAB to a future meeting to discuss the matter in more detail. It was also agreed

to ascertain whether the issue had been raised as a priority in other PSBs with the potential for a collective approach in order to exert greater influence in any future dialogue with Welsh Government or BT Openreach.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *members note the current position in relation to digital connectivity (as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report) together with the analysis of Strengths, Limitations, Weaknesses and Threats for each topic;*
- (b) *Alwen Williams from the NWEAB be invited to a future meeting to discuss work streams being undertaken to address digital connectivity in the area, and*
- (c) *other PSBs be contacted to ascertain whether they had identified digital connectivity as a priority area with the potential of providing a collective response in any future dialogue with BT Openreach and Welsh Government.*

At this point (10.40 a.m.) the meeting adjourned for a short refreshment break.

5 UPDATE ON THE MENTAL WELLBEING PRIORITY

A report was submitted (previously circulated) from Public Health Wales (PHW) providing a background to mental well-being together with identified actions and potential projects to address mental well-being and support the PSB priority of improving mental well-being for all. PSB had requested a review of priorities in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and a focus on the well-being of young people.

Richard Firth provided some background to the priority area leading to the latest review and guided members through the work carried out around mental well-being in Conwy and Denbighshire and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The review had found that the four identified potential projects for the PSB Mental Well-being priority remained extant and also recommended an option specifically related to children and young people also be incorporated into the proposed projects given the considerable impact of the pandemic on that group which could focus on educational settings. Although the five potential areas could be considered as separate entities there were significant areas of overlap and a recap was provided for each of the identified potential project areas listed below –

- Farming Community/Rural mental well-being
- Libraries for mental well-being
- Refresh of the Five Ways to mental well-being
- Local Implementation Teams / ICAN
- Mental Well-Being in Education Settings

Members acknowledged the validity of all the potential projects and discussed which projects they wished to take forward and where the PSB could most add value to the significant work that was already taking place. During debate support was expressed to progress the new project area identified relating to children and young people given the evidence highlighted in the report together with farming

community/rural mental well-being which had also been severely affected by the pandemic together with future challenges such as Brexit. As part of those discussions it was also noted that aspects of the three other projects could be integrated in those two priority areas given the cross cutting nature of that work. The links between the work of the Environmental Resilience Sub Group and benefits of green space with the supporting good mental well-being priority were highlighted and members noted that a meeting was being arranged between NRW and PHW to further discuss the issue. The potential for PSB to provide support and connections for the third/voluntary sector was raised but Wendy Jones felt that those community groups worked best without outside intervention or direction. However the importance of partner organisations making themselves available to provide assistance to community groups when contact was made was highlighted in order to build those positive connections and relationships. Given the lack of capacity at PHW it had been recommended that members nominate appropriate personnel within their organisations to participate in delivering the agreed projects.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the projects for the PSB Mental Well-being priority be confirmed as follows –*
- *Farming Community/Rural mental well-being*
 - *Mental Well-being in Educational Settings, and*
- (b) *each PSB partner organisation nominate a person to sit on the Mental Well-being Priority Project Sub-Group by the end of November 2020.*

6 WELSH GOVERNMENT PSB GRANT AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENT

Nicola Kneale provided a verbal update on the Welsh Government Grant to PSB and Wellbeing Assessment.

The annual PSB grant (worth around £85k for the North Wales region) had not been made available to PSBs in the last financial year due to Covid-19. Given the substantial statistical and engagement exercise on the Wellbeing Assessments due to be carried out it was hoped that funding would be made available to PSBs in the next financial year to help progress that work. Members were also advised of a Working Group set up by the Welsh Government to discuss the grant and criteria and also how else they could support PSB's in delivering the Wellbeing Assessments given the significant capacity pressures on partner organisations. Discussions included whether the grant could be used to help commission some analytical or editorial capacity to deliver the assessments and whether some economies of scale could be gained from using national research and testing those conclusions at a local level.

The Board agreed that in the event a grant was received from Welsh Government the focus for spend should be on the Wellbeing Assessments given their importance for developing strategic plans in the future. The Board also noted the Working Group discussions and supported the approach taken in that regard and the case made for funding. It was noted that officers would shortly be starting to put

a plan in place for producing the Wellbeing Assessments and the Board agreed to receive a report back to their next meeting on progress in that regard.

The Chair reported upon the Welsh Government's review of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and a stakeholder session she had recently attended on behalf of the PSB. It was noted that public organisations falling under the regulations would be asked for their input with further sessions over the coming months. A number of issues raised by organisations included lack of funding and the expectation that delivery was part of the day job together with the level of support received and balance between challenge and scrutiny. Other issues were raised around procurement and funding of joint projects. Organisations had been invited to future sessions with the Senedd Committee to provide feedback from an organisation perspective and the Chair would be attending a session in January with a report back expected in February/March 2020

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the verbal report on the PSB Grant and Wellbeing Assessment be received and the approach of the Working Group in making the case for funding and to delivery of the Wellbeing Assessment be supported, and*
- (b) *a progress report on the latest position including plans for producing the Wellbeing Assessment be submitted to the next meeting of the PSB.*

7 PSB RISK REGISTER ANNUAL REVIEW

Nicola Kneale introduced the report (previously circulated) presenting the Risk Register for annual review.

Amendments since the last review had been highlighted as follows –

PSB 1 – The risk that the PSB had insufficient funding, resources and capacity to deliver the priorities identified in the Well-being Plan. The inherent and residual risk scores had been downgraded from A2 to B3 and D3 to C3 respectively.

PSB 3 – The risk that the PSB failed to maximise the potential impact it could achieve through a collaborative approach. The residual risk score had been downgraded from B2 to C2.

PSB 5 (new risk) – The risk that there were further Covid-19 waves which required PSB members to focus their attention on response.

Members considered the risks, scores and mitigating actions included in the full Risk Register together with the amendments highlighted since the last review.

RESOLVED that the PSB's Risk Register be approved.

8 FORWARD WORK PLAN

A copy of the PSB forward work programme was presented and the following matters were discussed –

- the items agreed earlier on the agenda for inclusion in the forward work programme were reaffirmed including (1) an invitation to Alwen Williams, NWEAB to attend a future meeting, (2) an update on the Wellbeing Assessment and plan from officers, and (3) the usual update on each of the PSB priorities
- the Chair confirmed she would contact Glyndwr University with a view to them facilitating a workshop session (to be opened up to all Sub-Groups) in January
- agreed to include the offshore wind farm development as a potential future item and to assess its relevance to the PSB at the appropriate time, particularly in terms of any community benefits that could be derived from that project
- agreed to include an item to provide an update in terms of the action plan relating to the PSB Audit Wales Report at the next meeting.

***RESOLVED** that, subject to the above, the work programme be approved.*

9 MEETING ACTION TRACKER

A copy of the meeting action tracker was presented for consideration.

Members noted that most actions had been discussed earlier in the meeting and were currently ongoing or had since been completed. With regard to future Conwy and Denbighshire Joint Scrutiny meetings it was noted that the next meeting would be held on 8 January 2021 – the forward work programme for that meeting included an update from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the Annual Report.

***RESOLVED** that progress made on the actions arising from meetings be noted.*

10 MATTERS ARISING

Members noted the main matters arising from the meeting –

- action for partner organisations to provide Richard Firth (PHW) with details of their nominations to sit on the Mental Well-being Priority Project Sub-Group
- Supporting Environmental Resilience Sub-Group to revisit the current priorities and undertake some community work in that regard.

11 OLD COLWYN SEA DEFENCES UPDATE

For information only.

12 TEST, TRACE, PROTECT IN NORTH WALES

For information only.

13 CONWY FLEXIBLE FUNDING REPORT

For information only.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution.

Meeting concluded at 11.42 a.m.