

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held by video conference on Thursday, 16 September 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Ann Davies, Rachel Flynn, Christine Marston, Melvyn Mile, Rhys Thomas, David Williams and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair)

Also in attendance –

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets for agenda item 5 and

Councillor Mark Young, Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities for agenda item 6.

Observers –

Councillor Meirick Lloyd-Davies and Councillor Gwyneth Kensler

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Head of Customers, Communication and Marketing (LG), Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS), Strategic Planning Team Manager (NK), Community Safety Manager (ST), Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE), Committee Administrator/Host (SW) and Democratic Services Officer/Minutes (KE)

Chief Officer for Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC), Tom Barham

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gareth Davies and Pat Jones.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rachel Flynn to her first meeting of the Committee. Councillor Flynn had been appointed by the Conservative Group as one of its representatives on the Committee in place of Councillor Hugh Irving. Councillor Irving was thanked by the Chair for his contribution to the Committee's work during his period as a member.

2 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised with the Chair.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following personal interests were declared in relation to the business items indicated:

Business item 5, Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC): Councillor Rhys Thomas as a Trustee of the Vale of Clwyd Foodbank

Business item 6, Community Safety Partnership: Councillor Emrys Wynne as he served as a Justice of the Peace (JP).

At this juncture the Chair advised the Committee that she would be varying the order of business to enable sufficient time to be allocated for members to discuss with the new Chief Officer of Denbighshire Voluntary Service Council (DVSC) his future vision for the organisation. The Chief Officer would have to leave the meeting by 11am as he had another meeting to attend.

4 DENBIGHSHIRE VOLUNTARY SERVICES COUNCIL (DVSC)

The Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill introduced the recently appointed Chief Officer for Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC), Tom Barham to the Committee.

The Chief Officer DVSC gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the DVSC's role, how it had worked with Denbighshire County Council (DCC) over the years and its vision to strengthen the Third Sector and impact it had on residents of Denbighshire.

Key points of the presentation were the DVSC's aims to support, catalyse, amplify and challenge the third sector in Denbighshire:

- Support – the DVSC worked in partnership with Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) to provide advice, guidance, training and funding.
- Catalyse – bringing Third Sector organisations together to build partnerships, spread good practice and provide new services.
- Amplify – Helping the Third Sector have a voice in Denbighshire with public services, funders and commissioners.
- Challenge – Being an independent voice to support independent organisations if they are not being listened to and promote Third Sector excellence in standards of service and professionalism.

An important aspect for the Third Sector was promoting involvement in improving well-being in communities. Traditionally the Third Sector provided services in areas of food poverty and mental health. A new Well-being Team had recently been recruited by the DVSC to work in conjunction with the Third Sector, DCC, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), Public Services Board and the community.

DVSC had a senior officer looking to work with social enterprise and entrepreneurs across the County to create community hubs to promote local food producers, well-being cafes and social supermarkets.

The partnership between DVSC and DCC throughout the Covid-19 pandemic had been positive. DVSC had placed volunteers with:

- DCC
- Dial a Ride
- Forget Me Nots
- Prestatyn Town Council and
- 4x4 Community Responders amongst others.

Going forward a report had been commissioned to identify need and resilience within the Third Sector in Denbighshire. The report was due for completion in January 2022. A Third Sector Forum was to be established to engage with DCC and BCUHB to improve communication and work together on service delivery and development.

Responding to the Committee's questions the Chief Officer advised that:

- Talking Points, I CAN and Community Navigators were all useful signposts in the community. Engagement had been affected by Covid-19 but it was important for communication to be re-established with the community.
- It was anticipated that the re-opening of Ruthin Market Hall would be some time in October.
- A volunteer portal was in use and managed by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).
- The next DVSC annual general meeting would be held in November 2021 and would include the approval of the annual accounts.
- Additional funding to help support COVID-19 related support work had been received through the Welsh Government's (WG) Voluntary Sector Emergency Grants and from Comic Relief.
- The Morfa Hall building on Church Street in Rhyl was owned by the WCVA, not DVSC. The Chief Officer would discuss the proposals for the building and potential for a wellbeing centre with their Chief Executive, Ruth Marks.
- The DVSC's new website was under construction and due to be released in October.
- DVSC had an officer whose role was to help new groups to grow, get constituted, establish governance arrangements, and attract sustainable funding.
- The newsletter would be revised and rebooted later in the year, possibly with the introduction of Blogs etc.
- Consideration would be given to revising the Best Kept Village competition.

The Chair thanked the DVSC Chief Officer and asked him to return with an update in the new year.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

Resolved: subject to the above observations, to –

- (i) receive the Chief Officer's presentation on his future vision for Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and his ambitions to work with the Council and other groups and organisations**

throughout the county with a view to enhancing the lives of residents and communities; and
(ii) request that the Chief Officer attend a future meeting of the Committee, in approximately six months' time, to update members on the progress made to date in delivering his vision, outlining any challenges encountered and how they had been overcome.

The Chair advised the Committee that for the following business item it would be sitting in its capacity as the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Police & Justice Act 2006 ss. 19 and 20.

5 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities, Councillor Mark Young introduced the report (previously circulated). He advised that despite having to change the way the Partnership operated due to the pandemic they had managed to serve the Denbighshire community by working collectively – daily with police colleagues - to anticipate problems, deal with crimes and monitor trends. Additional funding had been sourced for Third Sector organisations working under increased demands.

Thirteen key crime areas were monitored during the pandemic. Ten areas saw a reduction in numbers, but three saw an increase. They were:

1. Stalking and Harassment;
2. Domestic Abuse and
3. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The Community Safety Manager, Sian Taylor referred to the highlight report included at appendix 1 and the three priority areas:

Priority 1- Reduce Crime and Disorder in Denbighshire by working in partnership.

The performance status had been set only as 'acceptable' as it covered activities of stalking and harassment and domestic abuse which had increased over lockdown.

The Partnership had continued to work collectively with the Fire and Rescue Service, Police, Health and Third Sector networks to get information out over the course of the pandemic. Numerous press releases had also been circulated.

All of the project/activity work associated with priority one had continued, albeit via online and telephone technology rather than face to face and its progress had been assessed as 'good'.

Regional Boards had met and the membership of some had changed during the pandemic. The Safer North Wales Strategic Partnership Board was chaired by Denbighshire's Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and attended by Denbighshire's senior officers. Meetings of the various Boards were held on a regular basis with quarterly information sharing meetings being held with CSP staff on Denbighshire's position in relation to performance and other matters.

Information from these meetings could then be shared with Denbighshire staff if and when required.

Priority 2 – Reducing reoffending.

The performance has been set as 'good' as there had been a reduction in both adult and youth offending, although it was recognised that it was not a normal year.

The integrated offender management programmes had continued, working in partnership to identify repeating youth offenders causing antisocial behaviour. Therefore, the project activity update had also been set as 'good'.

Priority 3 – Local Priorities

There had been a slight increase in reports of antisocial behaviour in the form of neighbour disputes over the course of the pandemic but overall the performance had been set as 'good'.

The project activities associated with priority 3 were also 'good'. There had been meetings to monitor antisocial behaviour and work continued to raise awareness of the Regional Vulnerability and Exploitation Board with regard to:

- Domestic Abuse
- Modern Slavery and
- County Lines.

Referring to the statistical data (pages 26 and 27) the Community Safety Manager expanded on the three areas that had seen an increase over the year and the crimes that made up each of those categories.

Stalking online had seen the biggest increase, particularly in the realm of social media. Victims were advised to make their public profiles private in order to deter perpetrators.

Referrals to the Domestic Abuse Service Unit (DASU) had more than doubled over the previous 12 months. Funding was secured from Welsh Government to support the more complex needs caused by increased isolation and lack of social interaction. The Partnership promoted the Live Fear Free helpline, the majority of calls came from victims being supported by third sector services.

Cyber-crimes – both Cyber-dependent and Cyber-enabled - rose by almost a third over the year. Raising awareness of scams by the Trading Standards Team and working with organisation such as Age Concern to advise caution and what to do if unsure of the authenticity of emails, texts or websites was a priority.

Following the presentation of the report members were advised:

- The report focussed on the work of the Community Safety Partnership rather than that of policing. The Committee could invite North Wales Police to come to Scrutiny to discuss aspects relating to their role specifically if they wished.

- The Public Space Protection Order relating to drinking in public places in Rhyl town centre had been enforced over 50 times since its renewal, several people had been summoned to Court.
- Inspections were undertaken upon businesses such as nail bars and car washes to rule out potential modern slavery and inspect Health and Safety and minimum wages/payroll records etc. Any irregularities identified in relation to accounts/payroll records were forwarded to Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) for further investigation.
- There was potential scope to expand on the restorative justice.
- Information relating to rural crime figures and wildlife crime would be requested from North Wales Police.
- The Community Safety Partnership did not monitor road traffic accidents. This was undertaken by the Road Safety Partnership. A contact number would be sought and circulated.
- Suspicious emails, websites etc. could be reported to the police online (via 101). Online fraud should always be reported to North Wales Police, benefit fraud should be reported to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- Baseline data of 2019 would be used as the comparator information for the 2021/22 report, as it was deemed that 2020/21 data would not be a suitable comparator due to the pandemic.
- CCTV monitoring was the responsibility of the CCTV Partnership Board and
- DCC would be promoting the new Community Alert and Rural Crime email facility currently under construction by North Wales Police.
- Mental health awareness training for Police Officers may be something that individual members wished to raise with the Police, it was not a matter within the remit of the CSP.

Prior to the conclusion of the discussion the Chair reminded members that representatives from North Wales Police were due to attend a Council Briefing session on 8 November to give a presentation on County Lines work and answer members' questions.

The Committee:

Resolved: - *subject to the above comments and the answers given in response to members' questions, to receive and endorse the performance and statistical information provided in the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report for 2020-21.*

6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8th July 2021 were submitted. It was:

Resolved: - *that the minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8th July 2021 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.*

No matters were raised in relation to the accuracy of the minutes or with regard to any matter reported within them.

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Confirmation was awaited from the Health Board on when its representatives would be in a position to attend a meeting to discuss its plans for services in Denbighshire, including the North Denbighshire Community hospital and other capital projects in the county.

The next meeting on 4th November 2021 had 4 items, including the North Wales Economic Ambition Board performance report for quarter 2. The quarter 1 report would be circulated shortly for information purposes and in preparation for the November meeting.

Earlier in the meeting the Committee had suggested inviting back the DVSC Chief Officer for an update. It was agreed that six months would be a suitable timeframe.

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group had allocated the item on the North Wales Regional Partnership Board Annual Report to the Committee's for consideration on 16th December.

Members were reminded to use the Scrutiny Proposal Form if they had anything they would like to be scrutinised.

It was:

Resolved: - subject to the above comments and inclusions –

- (i) to confirm the Committee's forward work programme; and***
- (ii) that virtual pre-meeting briefing session be held at 10am on Wednesday, 3 November 2021, at 10am.***

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Rhys Thomas had attended the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Challenge on 6th July 2021 and remarked on the resilience that the Service had shown over the previous 12 months.

Councillor Christine Marston advised members that she would be attending a meeting of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Stakeholder Reference Group the following week. She was also due to attend a meeting of the Conwy and Denbighshire Sub Regional Children's Assessment Centre Project Board the following week, at which an update was expected on the project's position following a recent re-tendering exercise in the wake of the original company appointed to build the facility entering into administration. Councillor Marston agreed to report to members on the outcome of that meeting.

The Committee thanked the representatives for reporting back on the activities and decisions taken at various boards and Groups on whom they represented the Committee. It was:

Resolved: - subject to the provision when available of the additional information requested, to receive and note the information updates received from Committee representatives on various Boards and Groups.

Meeting concluded at 11.55am