

CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee held via Video Conference on Friday, 11 February 2022 at 11.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Denbighshire County Council (DCC)
Councillor Meirick Lloyd-Davies, Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Rachel Flynn, Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Chris Hughes, Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC)
Councillor Ifor Lloyd, Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Don Milne, Conwy county Borough Council
Councillor Arwel Roberts, Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Liz Roberts, Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Geoffrey Corry, Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Smith (Vice-Chair), Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Graham Timms (Chair), Denbighshire County Council

ALSO PRESENT

Hannah Edwards Public Services Board Development Officer (CCBC)
Rhian Evans Scrutiny Coordinator (DCC)
Stephanie Jones, Committee Administrator (DCC)
Rhodri Tomos-Jones, Committee Administrator (DCC)
Dawn Hughes Scrutiny and Committee Services Officer (CCBC)
Fran Lewis Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager (CCBC)
Nicola Kneale Strategic Planning Manager (DCC)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugh Irving, Melvyn Mile and Joan Vaughan.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No items of a personal or prejudicial nature were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters had been raised with the Chair prior to the start of the meeting.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 June 2021 were submitted for approval. No matters were raised in relation to the contents of the minutes.

The Committee:

Resolved: that the minutes of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 June 2021 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

5 CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT 2022 - ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Chair welcomed Fran Lewis, Conwy County Borough Council, Head of Corporate Improvement & HR (HCIHR) to introduce the agenda item (previously circulated).

The HCIHR guided members through the report and the process undertaken to inform the well-being assessment 2022. Members were reminded that it was a statutory requirement for each PSB to produce an Assessment of Local Well-being. The approach as previously had been to consider the views of the community and the data research and demographic trends. It was noted that during the time of Covid restrictions engagement had been more challenging. Members heard officers adapted their approach to engage with the community.

It was realised that the engagement process had to be completed remotely. Officers were conscious whilst in general people had adapted to virtual working it had to be balanced with Zoom fatigue. It was stressed officers worked hard to promote the engagement and complete a dual track approach to not digitally exclude people.

Members heard that the development of 'county conversation' had taken place in Denbighshire and Conwy. The approach had been slightly different but adapted to suit each county. Within Denbighshire a series of virtual meetings were held by geographical area, with Conwy taking the approach of holding virtual meetings by particular citizen well-being theme. Each approach had produced the views of the community.

Officers felt the approach had been successful although it was noted the take up had been limited. A piece of work had been undertaken to analysis the previous engagement work completed in the previous 18-24 months to support the virtual engagement sessions. To ensure individuals were not excluded, both authorities held an online survey for communities to complete with hard copies made available for those that requested.

It was highlighted that the regional event that was commissioned to seek the views of the seldom heard had worked well. The event was held with the support of the Community Voices forum. The event was attended by over 40 organisations.

Members heard that engagement with a number of different community groups had taken place, with particular emphasis on the importance of seeking the views of young people. Members heard it had been challenging during this review but engagement had taken place with Denbighshire Youth Council and youth groups within Conwy.

Through the process the HCIHR stated officers had been able to collate the views and place in themes and corroborate that with the demographic and research information.

Members heard that included in pack had been information on the demographic breakdown (appendix to the report).

The Chair thanked the HCIHR for the detailed introduction and reminded members that the agenda item was specifically looking at the engagement process.

Responding to members' questions the Head of Corporate Improvement & HR advised:

- It was unclear why there had been a difference between the authorities take up. In terms of advertisement and promoting the events a very similar model was adopted. Social media platforms had been used by both authorities as was the support of members promoting the engagement.
- It was hoped holding events at different times would encourage further participation. It was noted the uptake had not been significantly more in the evening. Going forward, public engagement and consultation may be an area of work where the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee could help officers to achieve greater and wider participation.
- Members thanked the officers for the hard work in arranging the engagement events. It was felt that often residents did not want to engage in events and that was reflected in the uptake numbers.
- Residents generally engaged better on matters of specific interest to them rather than on broader strategic issues.
- The Strategic Planning Team Manager (Denbighshire County Council) stressed the importance of engaging, consulting and involving residents in designing solutions in the future as the well-being plan evolves. Consultation and engagement was a commitment by PSB and officers for future work.
- Members appreciated it had been difficult times to hold engagement events but the Covid restrictions in place had also opened opportunities for holding events remotely.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

Resolved: subject to the above observations to support the engagement approach undertaken to inform the development of the Well-being Assessment, and receive the data and breakdown on the responses received.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and acknowledged the difficulties associated with public engagement.

6 CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT 2022

Nicola Kneale, Denbighshire County Council – Strategic Planning Manager (SPM) introduced the report (previously circulated) stating the report provided details of the well-being assessment that had been developed over the previous 12 months. The report provided the opportunity to review the key findings from the Assessment of Local Well-being and make recommendations as part of the consultation process.

Members were reminded of the importance of the discussion of the assessment in line with the statutory requirements in processing and producing the well-being assessment 2022. Members heard the report provided assurance on the robust analysis process that had been followed to develop the assessment.

It was stressed the report was a key strategic document, under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 legislation. With the intention for the assessment to be used to underpin strategic planning for public bodies in Wales.

The SPM provided a brief background on the work that had taken place to achieve the assessment. It was explained the initial stages had comprised of assembling a cross sector, cross county editorial team of researchers and experts from different organisations of the public sector. The team had then been tasked with examining the well-being of the area based on the seven well-being goals under the Future Generations Act legislation. Members were informed that to produce the assessment, officers had used public sector expertise in terms of data and research, professional observation and the development of professional links with national research bodies to feed into the assessment. The engagement with professionals, residents and elected members had also contributed to the assessment. The intelligence gathered had been used to review and update the existing assessment.

The research and analysis phase had taken place from January to September, following that phase the analysis and conclusions had been sense tested by the mutual editorial team that had been established along with colleagues from outside organisations. The sense checking had taken place prior to the assessment being published for consultation.

Members heard the information contained in the assessment was housed on the Conwy & Denbighshire PSB's website in a Wikipedia-style format, as per its previous iteration.

The SPM stressed the challenge had been to decipher some of the information made available to officers during the research, how to analyse that information and draw conclusions from that. It was felt the executive summary had provided an overview of the key topics and themes that had emerged from the research conducted. The assessment focused not only on the current situation, and current or previous trends but also the anticipated future of the referenced topics.

Members were guided to the five questions detailed in the consultation, listed below (as detailed in the report) –

- i. Do you agree with the findings in the Well-being Assessment?
- ii. Is there anything we need to change?
- iii. Is there anything we've missed?
- iv. Are you likely to make use of the Well-being Assessment and its contents?
- v. Any other comments or ideas on the Well-being Assessment?

The Chair thanked the SPM for the detailed and informative report and reminded members of the vast amount of information available online.

Responding to members' questions the Strategic Planning Manager advised:

- Officers had been conscious of the difficulties of producing the assessment during the current unprecedented times. They recognised the need to monitor and review some of the findings and conclusions, possibly on an annual basis as situations evolved. The assessment would be published online, enabling the document to remain live and any updates or key changes could be made as and when required.
- The Executive Summary and Assessment's references and headings included the aging population and young people. Officers had recognised the issue of outward migration of young people. This concern had resulted in the authorities having an aging population and high care costs and lower revenue income.
- Members raised concern on the authorities not being self-sufficient in terms of manufacturing and energy. It was noted more could be done to research into self-efficiency in the area. The SPM noted the concerns of the members and confirmed within the assessment reference and research to a green economy had been included.
- It was suggested a review of the effects of Covid and the working habits and requirements could be included when reviewing the retention of young residents and professionals.
- The views and concerns of members was noted and would be fed back to PSB for information when the PSB developed its Well-being Plan.
- A commission for infographics had been initiated, this would aid individuals to focus on some of the key findings in the assessment. It was hoped it would be useful and practical for its readers.
- Members were in agreement with the recommendations but requested a note be included on the inclusion that PSB and partners have consideration to the greater impact on the wellbeing through procurement services. Members agreed for officers to discuss and formulate the wording of an additional recommendation take place following the meeting with agreement of the Chair and Vice-Chair on the wording.

The Chair thanked all involved in the process of formulating the Well-being assessment 2022.

The Joint-Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above comments and observations to

(i) receive the report;

(ii) confirm the findings of the Well-being Assessment;

(iii) recommend that the PSB, including its members and partner organisations, utilise all their procurement powers as local as possible in a bid to secure maximum emphasis on employment, reduce carbon footprint in line with local and national goals, support local well-being and help sustain the Welsh language and culture; and

(iv) confirm that the JOSC will make use of the Well-being Assessment and its contents when scrutinising the Public Services Board and to support its own forward work planning activities.

7 FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP

Introducing the item, the Chair advised that Committee members and support officers had held a workshop immediately prior to Committee meeting. The objective of the workshop was to give members an opportunity to review the recommendations contained in Audit Wales' discussion paper 'Review of Public Services Boards in Wales (October 2019)' which specifically related to PSB scrutiny, these being:

- (a) with a view to improving scrutiny of the PSB to use the six themes to help make scrutiny 'Fit for the Future' to measure the Committee's performance to date, and also identify areas which required strengthening going forward; and
- (b) going forward how to secure adequate engagement with a wider range of relevant stakeholders who could help hold the PSB to account.

Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Rhian Evans, summarised the various aspects of the Committee's role covered during the workshop, the six themes to make scrutiny fit for the future. These being, that the Committee:

- knew its role
- was familiar with the powers vested in it, what it could do and what it could not do
- understood what it was attempting to achieve
- planned its work to achieve its aims
- was aware of the support arrangements available to it and the tools and mechanisms it could utilise to achieve its aims; and
- regularly evaluated its effectiveness with a view identifying any gaps in knowledge and areas for strengthening as it strived continually to face future challenges

During the course of the workshop it became apparent that the Joint Committee was familiar with its role, as well as the extent of its powers to scrutinise the PSB and hold it to account. Since its inception the JOSC had been keen to understand the role of each statutory PSB partner on the PSB and what each of those partners felt they gained from being a member of the PSB. Therefore, the JOSC from the outset agreed to have a standing item on its business agenda on 'Contribution of PSB partners to the work of the PSB and the benefits of the PSB to partners', inviting each statutory partner in turn to give a presentation on this theme. Whilst this programme had commenced and seemed to be an effective way of gaining an understanding of the PSB's working and its benefits for residents and partners, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and partner organisations' resources had to be channelled to responding to the pandemic. Nonetheless, as the PSB was such a high-level strategic type forum, JOSC members were of the view that it would be worthwhile for the new Joint Committee post the local authority elections to resume this exercise once 'business as usual' was resumed. The current practice of circulating PSB meeting agendas to JOSC members for information should continue as should the practice of encouraging JOSC members to attend PSB meetings to observe the proceedings.

It was clear that in future local authorities and other public sector bodies would be expected to have greater regard to regional developments and would be expected to work together on a regional basis i.e. via Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). It would therefore be key for the JOSC and others to understand how to work effectively on a local, sub-regional and regional basis. The JOSC therefore would have a role in securing synergies between the work of the PSB and the various bodies such as the CJCs, North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB), North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) etc.

Going forward it would be crucial for the JOSC to ensure that its recommendations were meaningful and deliverable. To achieve this, it would need to devise an appropriate and informed forward work programme. A number of tools could be used to achieve this, for example various PSB plans and strategies as well as external data such as the latest Census data which would become available during the next municipal term.

Moving forward members indicated that it would be useful to:

- hold a workshop event periodically for the purpose of evaluating the Joint Committee's work and its effectiveness
- to continue to hold pre-meeting briefing sessions between the Chair and Vice-Chair and scrutiny support officers for the purpose of discussing the formalities for the meeting. Invitations should also be sent to the pre-meeting briefing session to JOSC members who could attend if they wished, it would be a matter of personal preference if they wished to attend.
- co-opt representatives from the PSB's 'invited participants list' on to the Joint Committee for discussion on specific items or areas of work, as their input into those items may assist members to assess the effectiveness of the PSB's plans and help it to hold the Board to account;
- develop closer links with the city, town and community councils in the area, along with other stakeholders and individuals who had engaged with the development of the Well-being Assessment, and in due course the Well-being Plan, as a method to help evaluate the impact of the Assessment and Plan and to gauge whether the PSB was delivering against their expectations
- request that a regular business item be listed on future PSB business meeting agendas on the presentation of JOSC meeting minutes to the Board. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the JOSC should be invited to attend PSB meetings to present the minutes. If the need arose this business item could also facilitate the presentation of any JOSC recommendations to the PSB for consideration. It would also make the JOSC more visible to the PSB and help build clear communication channels between both bodies. It also had the potential to help build a constructive and effective working relationship between the PSB and the JOSC, and vice-versa.

The Joint Committee:

Resolved: to agree the actions listed above and that the Chair/Vice-Chair report the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee's proposed actions to address Audit Wales' recommendations to the Public Services Board at its next available meeting.

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny and Committee Services Officer, Dawn Hughes, introduced the Joint-Committee's forward work programme (previously circulated). As the Well-being Assessment had been discussed, and recommendations made in relation to it, at the current meeting and there was no statutory business to discuss at the meeting scheduled for March 2022 it was agreed to cancel the Joint Committee's next scheduled meeting on 11 March 2022.

Members were advised that following the local authority elections in May 2022 and prior the Joint Committee's next scheduled meeting on 21 October 2022, a familiarisation and development event would be held in late September or early October 2022 for the new Joint Committee. Date to be confirmed as soon as possible. This would give ample time for elected members to settle into their constituent authority roles and attend all basic member training and development events before assuming their role on a Joint Committee.

The meeting scheduled for 21 October 2022 would be examining the development of the PSB's Well-being Plan and the JOSC itself could develop its programme of future work.

In addition, a provisional date for a meeting of the Joint Committee on 10 March 2023 had been established. This would be confirmed later.

The Joint Committee:

Resolved: to

- (i) cancel the Joint Committee's next scheduled meeting on 11 March 2022; and***
- (ii) agree to the holding of a familiarisation and member development event for members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in late September or early October 2022, ahead of the Joint Committee's first meeting of the new authorities' term of office on 21 October 2022.***

The Chair thanked all members for their participation in both the workshop and meeting. He also thanked them for their contributions towards the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its first term and wished them all well for the future.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.