

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE on Thursday, 7 September 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Karen Edwards (Vice-Chair), James Elson, Jon Harland, Alan James, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Merfyn Parry, Cheryl Williams and Huw Williams (Chair)

Lead Member- Lead Member for Health and Social Care, Councillor Elen Heaton was in attendance at the Committee's invitation for agenda item 5.

Observers- Councillor Mark Young.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Social Services and Education (NS), Principal Manager - Operational Services (DS), Scrutiny Coordinator (KE and RE) and Committee Administrators (SJ and RTJ).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michelle Blakeley-Walker.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests of a personal, or a personal and prejudicial nature were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No matters of an urgent nature had been drawn to the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator's attention prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 June 2023 were submitted.

Matters Arising – Councillor Elson provided the Committee with a verbal update on the minutes of the previous Capital Scrutiny Group held on the 7th June 2023. He informed members the group were provided with a finance update from the Head of Finance.

The Group discussed a Capital Bid in relation to the Nature Reserve at Green Gates Farm in St Asaph. Which would be mainly funded by the SPF Grants.

A report was also presented on the Sustainable Communities for Learning, which provided some background information for members.

The Group discussed Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds, it listed 8 business cases, no questions were raised on those cases.

The Chair thanked officers for arranging and meeting members at the new waste transfer station in Denbigh. He felt the site visit was extremely interesting and beneficial to see first-hand. Members looked forward to a future visit to see the site in operation.

Councillor Merfyn Parry asked for an update on the Flooding Task and Finish group, the Scrutiny Co-ordinator stated a request at each Member Area Group was currently taking place to nominate a representative to establish the group and schedule the task and finish group meetings.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator highlighted the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment review was due to be presented to the Committee at this meeting but had been deferred to the next committee meeting in October 2023.

The Committee:

RESOLVED: *that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 June 2023 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.*

5 ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE FORUM WALES (CFW) & CARE PROVIDERS IN DENBIGHSHIRE

The Lead Member for Health and Social Care introduced the report (previously circulated), she reminded members the report followed the call-in report of Cabinet's decision to accept the North Wales Regional fee group recommendation for 2023/24 in December 2022. The Committee had met to discuss the decision earlier in the year and requested an update report from the Adult Social Care and Homelessness Services on their engagement with Care Forum Wales (CFW) & Care Providers in Denbighshire.

The Lead Member noted the report was concise which was due to the fee setting process for 2024/25 was still in the early stages. In her opinion the report highlighted the commitment by the Authority to encourage a transparent and co-productive relationships with the providers in Denbighshire.

The service would continue to work closely with all providers for the fee setting process for the next finance year.

It was stressed to members the purpose of the report was to discuss the concerns raised previously regarding engagement with CFW and local care providers.

The Corporate Director: Social Services and Education thanked the Lead Member for the introduction and continued by stressing, engagement with providers was part of an officer's day to day role. Constant communication between the Authority and providers took place. Across Adult Social Care and Homelessness there were a number of providers that the authority worked alongside and commissioned a

variety of services to support the needs of Denbighshire citizens and often individuals who reside outside the authority.

The report provided an overview of the additional engagement that officers had with providers following the report earlier in the year. The report focused on those providers offering residential care and domiciliary care.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and Officers for the detailed introduction and report.

In response to members' questions the officers and representatives provided further detail on the following:

- The concern members had raised previously had been around the lack of engagement from providers to discuss fees and costings. Officers stressed the service had engaged with providers regarding the fees, officers were disappointed with the number of providers that formally engaged with the department in the process. Officers had committed to trying to increase engagement with care providers going forward. Members heard that officers worked with providers regionally as a number of providers offered services across numerous authorities.
- Engagement response from providers was historically low, seeking financial data often compounded the issue.
- Within the report it highlighted that the Principal Manager - Operational Services had been engaged with discussions with Care Forum Wales. He stated the meetings he had attended had been informative and positive. It was emphasised that the Chief Executive along with the Corporate Director: Social Services and Education had met with CFW. The Authority had an open dialogue with CFW and was keen to build a good, positive relationship.
- During the Covid pandemic, officers across the Authority fought for the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), vaccinations, and other considerations for care workers. Discussions with Welsh Government, National Commissioning Board and CFW, on such issues had continued following the ease of restrictions. The case for PPE provision to continue for social care providers to continue in the current financial year. The position had to be that that provision was correctly funded. In those discussions it was made clear that Local Authorities would require the funding in full in order to store and distribute PPE. As an authority the stance taken had been if the funding ended unfortunately the provision ended. Local Authorities could not source the additional resources. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Corporate Director for all her efforts to source the PPE for Denbighshire and authorities across Wales.
- Members were pleased to see the progress in making contact with service providers and the process in place to continue improvement to engagement.
- The position of an open book policy had always been held by the authority. Providers were encouraged to contact officers with any specific additional need requirements and to explain the need for any additional funding.
- A number of providers in Denbighshire were small care providers and it was often seen, for those providers to provide the fine detail of additional costs and fees was very time consuming and complicated. The Principal Manager

- Operational Services was keen to offer support to providers to assist providers in making that information available.
- For further providers to engage following the fee setting exercise was seen as positive. Officers would like to see further engagement and stressed further engagement work would continue.
- Members were reminded that the regional process was only a small part of the process for fee setting. Fees were often discussed on a case by case basis.
- Once the indicative rate was published, officers contacted each service provider informing them of the following years indicative rates. They were invited to contact officers and offer feedback and provide evidence of any cases that may require additional costs.
- Feedback from service providers was always encouraged. The Authority had an open door relationship with service providers and would support where possible.
- The relationship with CFW was changeable depending on the issue at hand. Disagreements on certain areas as in any working relationship would be encountered and discussed. Discussions on a day to day basis were positive.
- Return on investment was an important part of the indicative fee setting process, which carried through to the open book exercise.
- Members congratulated the officers for the progress made following the discussion at the previous Committee meeting.

The Chair thanked all the officers for the continued work in engaging with Care providers and offered thanks to all present for the detailed discussion.

At the conclusion of a comprehensive discussion the Committee, having considered the report:

RESOLVED:

- I. Confirmed it had read, understood, and taken account of the update report and*
- II. Requested a further update report be presented to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.*

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator guided members through the Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme report (previously circulated).

The next meeting was scheduled for 19 October 2023, proposed for that meeting were three agenda items.

- I. The new Waste Service Model- Progress Report;
- II. Rhyl Regeneration Programme and Governance and
- III. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment review.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator encouraged members if they had any issues or concerns to complete and return the Members Proposal Form (Appendix 2) for deliberation at the next Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting on the 3rd October 2023.

Appendix 3 to the report was the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme should the Committee like to scrutinise forthcoming issues.

The Committee:

RESOLVED: *to receive the report and confirm the Committee's forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.*

7 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor James Elson provided feedback on the Capital Scrutiny Group meeting which took place on the 27 July 2023. The group discussed 4 or 5 different items, including an item which reviewed flooding at Rhuddlan cemetery of which the group asked for further consultation. Councillor Elson provided members with a brief description of the other reports presented to the group. He informed members the Llannerch bridge was at stage 2 – design phase, it was pleasing to hear Welsh Government had agreed to support this development over the next 2 years. Councillor Elson informed members a discussion around the repair work to Nant Clwyd y Dre, garden wall had taken place. The project had overspent and would result in the repair work potentially costing £650,000 he suggested it may be an area Scrutiny should debate. He agreed to complete a Scrutiny Member proposal form.

Councillor Cheryl Williams raised concerns on the weeding programme currently being undertaken. The Chair advised Councillor Williams to write to the appropriate officer and request a report be provided to her Member Area Group.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the support and attendance at the meeting and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 10.55 a.m.