

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Conference room 1A, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 5 June 2014 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Vice-Chair), Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Ann Davies, Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Pat Jones, Margaret McCarroll, Dewi Owens and Merfyn Parry

Observers: Councillors Huw Hilditch-Roberts and Martyn Holland

ALSO PRESENT

Director of Social Services (NS), Head of Children & Family Services (LR), Business Manager, Safeguarding & Reviewing Team (GH), Early Intervention, Strategy & Support Service Manager (VA), Business Support Early Intervention Officer (MH), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bill Tasker

Apologies were also received from the Lead Member for Social Care & Children's Services, Councillor Bobby Feeley.

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all Members and Officers to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting and especially to the Director of Social Services, Nicola Stubbins, who was attending her first Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Chair also extended a welcome to two new Members, namely Councillors Raymond Bartley and Richard Davies.

The Chair informed the Committee of the resignation from Partnerships Scrutiny Committee of Councillor Alice Jones. A letter had been sent to Councillor Jones, on behalf of the Committee, to thank her for all her hard work on the Committee.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, CVs/Statements had been requested from interested parties for the office of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Raymond Bartley had submitted a Statement and the nomination had been proposed and seconded for the office of Vice-Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

***RESOLVED** that Councillor Raymond Bartley be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.*

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Raymond Bartley declared a personal interest, as a Trustee of Home Start, in Item 9, North Wales Regional Advocacy Service for Children and Young People.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 10 April, 2014 were submitted.

***RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 10 April, 2014, be received and approved as a correct record.*

6 CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD

The Head of Children & Family Services introduced the report (previously circulated) for Scrutiny Members to monitor the Local Safeguarding Children's Board's achievements and performance in delivering its key priorities for 2013/2014 and information on its key priorities for 2014/2015.

Leighton Rees, Head of Children & Family Services was in attendance as Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

The Business Manager stated that an LSCB report had previously been presented to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in November 2013 and it had been requested at that meeting that an update on the key priorities for 2013/14 be presented to the Committee.

Committee members considered the report and progress made during 2013/14 with the delivery of the LSCB's key priorities.

Whilst it had been acknowledged that the delivery of some of the priorities had been somewhat impeded by work taking place to establish a Regional Safeguarding Children's Board and to develop the interfaces between the Regional Board and sub-regional delivery groups, members did have a number of concerns. These concerns related to:

- The Safe Employment Task & Finish Group which had not met due to difficulties in finding a mutually convenient date and time to ensure maximum attendance or due to adverse weather conditions. Members suggested that the use of video conference facilities could be the way of overcoming such problems and ensuring that the Group met to progress its work and deliver

the guidance. The Committee asked to be kept informed of the Task & Finish Group's progress in delivering its objectives.

- GPs' interaction with child protection referrals, particularly their willingness to draw suspected child abuse cases to Children's Services/ Health Board's safeguarding officers' attention. Members asked that progress in developing GPs' involvement with the referral process be reported to them in due course.

Discussion also took place on the LSCB and Children's Services approach to emotional neglect and the way they worked with other organisations and agencies with respect to dealing with emotional neglect cases. Officers advised that emotional neglect was a difficult area as there were no clearly defined boundaries of what exactly constituted emotional neglect. Members were keen to know whether there was a policy in operation in the County's schools to help identify emotional and physical abuse or neglect. They also requested to know whether siblings and friends of disabled children were being monitored to ensure that they were not being inadvertently excluded from normal school activities because they were acting as their carer whilst in school.

Following a detailed discussion, the Committee:

RESOLVED:

- (a) To accept the report and note the progress achieved in delivering the Conwy and Denbighshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board Business Plan for 2013/14;*
- (b) That every effort be made to facilitate the work of the Safe Employment Task & Finish Group and to deliver the Guidance;*
- (c) That the Board should continue to work with GPs with a view to enhancing their interaction with the child protection referral process;*
- (d) That information on the progress achieved with both (b) and (c) above be reported back to the Committee in due course;*
- (e) That information on membership of the new North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board and the Conwy and Denbighshire Safeguarding Delivery Group be circulated to members as soon as they become available;*
- (f) That information be provided on the number of children educated at home across the County and on measures being taken in the County's schools to support siblings and friends of disabled pupils to ensure that they are not inadvertently excluded from school and childhood activities or experiences due to their caring duties.*

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, which requested the Committee to review and agree its Forward Work Programme, and provided an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. The Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 2, and a table summarising recent Committee resolutions, and advising on the progress of their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 3. Also attached was a list of Scrutiny representatives on Service Challenge Groups 2013/2014 as Appendix 4.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings as detailed in Appendix 1. Members requested that Lead Members, Councillors Huw Jones, Eryl Williams, Bobby Feeley and David Smith be invited to present their reports at the July 2014 meeting of the Committee. The Leader, Councillor Hugh Evans, would be invited to attend if his schedule allowed.

Regarding Partnerships Scrutiny representatives on Service Challenge Groups 2013/14, two changes to the representation were made:

- Business Planning & Performance – Councillor Richard Davies
- Planning & Public Protection – Councillor Raymond Bartley

The School Standards Monitoring Group requested a representative and substitute from Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to attend the Group. Councillor Dewi Owens agreed to continue as the representative and Councillor Richard Davies agreed to act as substitute representative.

Members were urged to attend the Service Challenge Groups but if they were unable to attend then to attempt to arrange for a substitute member to attend in their place.

Following a request from the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group, members had been asked if they required any further scrutiny training. Members of Partnerships Scrutiny all confirmed they would benefit from a scrutiny refresher training session.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair had recently attended the Denbighshire Health & Social Care Board. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator was in contact with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCU) regarding dates for their attendance at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chair suggested the following be added to a future Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting with BCU representatives:

- Single point of access for adults
- Communication on hospital discharge

RESOLVED that the feedback be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

9 NORTH WALES REGIONAL ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Head of Children & Family Services introduced the confidential report (previously circulated) for Scrutiny Members to consider proposals for commissioning an independent advocacy service for vulnerable children and young people across the North Wales region from April 2015 onwards.

Information had been provided on the proposal for commissioning an independent advocacy service for vulnerable children and young people known to Social Services in North Wales. The collaboration included the six North Wales local authorities.

Members were advised that the Children's Commissioner for Wales was eager that all children and young people in Wales should have access to an advocacy service. However, the proposal under consideration was to commission an independent regional service that would be accessible to all children known to Social Services across North Wales.

Commissioning the service on a regional basis would help ensure that children and young people across the region would have access to a fair and equitable service, with specialists in various fields accessible to all who qualified for the service.

The new service would also build upon new and more proactive ways of engaging with the children and young people concerned. It had the potential to engage with them at an earlier stage and, therefore, address matters of concern with respect to their care before they escalated to a more serious concern or complaint. A more proactive service, which would be widely promoted to those who qualified to use it, also had the potential to be a more cost effective service.

Members supported the objective and aims of the regional service, but raised concerns on whether the proposed funding would be adequate, particularly in light of the risks outlined in the business case with respect to compromising and diluting the quality of the service, limiting tendering process choices and users choice of advocate. Assurances were given that potential service providers had already expressed an interest in delivering the service despite the limited financial resources available. Contract award, management and monitoring procedures would be sufficiently robust to ensure that the specified service would be delivered within the contract award price. Quarterly contract management procedures would be established and regular meetings would be held with the service provider to discuss all aspects of contract management and delivery.

Members requested that a Council Briefing session be arranged for officers to highlight the importance of corporate parenting, advocacy services and other matters relating to looked after children to all councillors.

Following detailed discussion the Committee:

RESOLVED:

- (i) Subject to the above observations and the assurances received with respect to the allocated budget being sufficient to deliver the service, to support the proposal to commission a regional advocacy service for vulnerable children and young people; and*
- (ii) To recommend to Cabinet that it supports the proposal to commission a North Wales Advocacy Service for Children and Young People subject to the reassurances given that the budget is sufficient to deliver the service and to discharge the Council's duty to support children and young people to make representations or complaints about their care in the services.*

MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12.00 P.M.