

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl on Thursday, 14 May 2015 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Vice-Chair), Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Meirick Davies, Pat Jones, Merfyn Parry and Bill Tasker.

Lead Member Councillor H.LI. Jones attended at the Committee's request as did Mr John Bellis (Chair) Rhyl Coastal Partnership (RCP); Mrs Margaret O'Sullivan (Chair) Denbighshire Coastal Partnership (DCP) and Mr John Watkin (Chief Executive) Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC).

Councillors Stuart Davies, Rhys Hughes and Huw Jones attended as observers.

ALSO PRESENT

Director of Social Services (NS), Head of Highways and Environmental Services (SP), AONB Officer (HS); Countryside and Heritage Services Manager (HR), Strategic Planning Team Manager (LG), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

Members were informed that Councillor R.J. Davies had resigned as a Member of the Committee and Councillor J.A. Davies had been appointed Vice Chair of the Council. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator (SC) confirmed that nominations would be sought for the vacant positions.

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Dewi Owens.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Scrutiny Coordinator explained that pending changes to the Membership of the Committee, the appointment of a Vice Chair be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – *that the appointment of a Vice Chair of the Committee be deferred to the next meeting.*

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor T.M. Parry declared a personal interest in agenda items 7 and 8 as a County Council representative on the AONB.

4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 19th March, 2015 were submitted.

Matters arising:-

3. Acute Surgery Services at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd:- The Chair confirmed that as agreed a letter had been sent to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's (BCUHB) Chief Executive, seeking clarity on the types of surgery that would be performed at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in future. The SC explained that a copy of the letter and the response had been included in the Information Brief for the meeting.

5. Co-ordination of Community Funding Streams: - Councillor M.LI. Davies made reference to the Gwynt y Môr Community Fund and explained that the substation referred to was actually in the parish of Cefn Meiriadog near St Asaph.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

6 ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND THIRD SECTOR IN DENBIGHSHIRE

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Denbighshire Coastal Partnership (DCP), Rhyl Coastal Partnership (RCP) and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) to the meeting to give an insight into their organisations and their roles in promoting and supporting community, voluntary and third sector involvement in the County. Copies of presentation slides outlining the three organisations' work and the groups which had benefitted from their work had been published as part of the committee papers. The DCP and the RCP gave an overview of the work they do to manage and administer the community monies available from the RWE Innogy UK Ltd. Community Fund (the Rhyl Flats and North Hoyle Windfarms money), including publicity about the fund, the application and award process, the organisations which had benefitted from the fund and the types of projects funded.

In response to Members' questions representatives:-

- advised that they welcomed applications from all types of community projects etc. and that each application was considered and judged on their own merits against the set criteria;
- outlined the membership of the DCP and RCP and advised that, subject to checking the organisation's constitution and discussing the matter with the RCP membership, officials would formally write to the Council seeking it to appoint a County Councillor to serve on the RCP;

- advised that the RCP had awarded money to the Denbighshire Community Development Agency (CDA) to support it until it closed in March, 2015, and from April 2015 it had secured an agreement with the Wellington Centre on Wellington Road which had enabled the equipment previously located in the CDA in Bodfor Street to be housed and accessible for public use at the Wellington Centre. Whilst residents were now becoming aware of the equipment's relocation the RCP were also in the process of publicising the new location;
- confirmed that the Foryd Centre had been approached with respect to housing the former CDA equipment etc. but this had not been successful, hence the reason they were now accommodated at the Wellington Centre. The RCP expressed its gratitude to the Wellington Centre for their assistance.

The Chief Executive of the DVSC outlined his organisation's role. He highlighted the broad spectrum of organisations which made up the third sector in the County, ranging from large public sector organisations such as housing associations to small local groups such as an independent after school clubs etc. Their common denominator being that they were driven by the needs of the community they served.

Members were advised that:-

- up until the end of March 2015 DVSC had 50 members of staff (both part-time and full time) and as of the 1st April, due to budget cuts, the staffing numbers had been reduced to 15 (or 7 full-time equivalent (fte)). Of these 7 staff, 4 were funded for specific projects - one of whom was funded by BCUHB, this meant that 3 fte staff were left to deal with all other work, including administration and supporting community groups to source and apply for funding;
- another part-time officer had been partly funded by the Council for the purpose of social care funded projects. Both this officer and the Health Board funded officer worked closely together;
- DVSC was currently in the process of advertising and recruiting for a development and governance officer who would specifically work with groups across the County to advise and support with grant applications. These types of roles were viewed as 'return on investment' posts as the community funding drawn into the County by such officers far exceeded the salary and associated on-costs of the employees;
- due to financial cuts for 2015/16 DVSC was currently operating a £45K deficit budget for the current year. This had been compounded further by the loss of the discretionary rate relief grant of circa £1K from the County Council;
- DVSC did not provide services directly to service-users i.e. supporting care-leavers. However, they did support organisations and agencies who delivered those services e.g. Action for Children;

The Director of Social Services advised that whilst the Council did not have the finances to provide designated officer posts to support the work of organisations such as DVSC, DCP and RCP, it was already providing support for organisations in the form of relevant data to support funding bids etc. In addition, an approach had been made to the Council to see if it could release officer time to check completed applications prior to their submission. This request was under consideration.

Members were encouraged to highlight to community groups within their areas the existence and potential benefits of the new Gwynt y Môr windfarm fund, due to be launched officially in the summer. This fund which would be managed and administered by Conwy Voluntary Services Council (CVSC), with the involvement of both Denbighshire and Flintshire Voluntary Services' Councils, would be worth in the region of £700K annually. The application criteria was expected to be published in July, but maps illustrating the qualifying communities should be available within the next 2 months. Certain organisations may wish to apply for money from this fund to employ a community funding co-ordinator or similar post. Members suggested that similar posts could be funded as part of Town and Area Plans in certain areas.

The Chair thanked the voluntary sector's representatives for their attendance and for answering members' questions, stating that she hoped that the Council and third sector could work together effectively in future for the benefit of the county's resident. It was:

RESOLVED – *that Committee*

- (a) receive the Denbighshire Coastal Partnership, Rhyl Coastal Partnership and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council presentations, and*
- (b) invites them back to a future meeting to discuss partnership working between the Council, community, voluntary and third sector organisations across the County.*

7 THE JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) 2014-15 PROGRESS REPORT

A copy of a report by the AONB Officer had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Lead Member for Leisure, Youth, Tourism and Rural Development in introducing the report emphasised that it was a progress report on the AONB's work, both inside and outside of the AONB area, and on the Joint Committee's work since the initial report's presentation to the Committee twelve months ago.

The Lead Member and the AONB Officer detailed the membership of the AONB Joint Committee and that of the AONB Partnership, the latter was due to hold its inaugural meeting the following day. They also outlined the work underway with Countryside Service in attempt to break down barriers between urban and rural dwellers, and with specialist tourist venues such as the North Wales Cycling Centre of Excellence. It was confirmed that the health and well-being initiatives underway should support the Council and other partners' preventative agendas and lead in the long-term to a healthier population.

In responding to Councillors' questions the Lead Member and the AONB Officer advised that:-

- money had been set-aside to help fund projects and initiatives to provide transport for residents from the county's more deprived urban areas into the AONB to benefit from the services and amenities available there;
- the bus service to Llyn Brenig had not been operating for some time;

It was explained that each local authority's contribution towards the AONB's budget had been set using an agreed formula. Over the next five years the budget would become, by negotiation, equitable between the three local authorities (Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham). Councillor Stuart Davies was of the view that until such time as all authorities paid an equitable amount, Joint Committee membership from each Authority should not be equitable. Whilst Members of the Partnership had a duty to act first and foremost in the interest of the Partnership and of the AONB, they had been appointed as members of it due to their knowledge of the area and their interest in the organisation's work.

Prior to concluding the discussion the Committee agreed that a future meeting of the Committee should be held in the Llangollen area to enable local members and the AONB Officer to show locations of interest to elected members. Members were also encouraged to attend the numerous events scheduled to be held in the AONB during the spring and summer months.

Following further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED – *that the Committee, subject to the above observations, supports the progress undertaken on AONB Governance, and the Projects delivered in the first twelve months.*

8 REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES

A copy of a report by the Countryside and Heritage Services Manager Denbighshire (CHSMD) had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Lead Member for Leisure, Youth, Tourism and Rural Development when introducing the report emphasised that he had requested scrutiny to consider this call for evidence as he wanted the view of the Council on the recommendations set out by the Welsh Government's (WG) Minister for Natural Resources following the Stage 1 Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales. He drew Members' attention in particular to the paragraph in the Minister's letter to the Chair of the Review, referring to the current number of Planning Authorities in Wales. The Lead Member was particularly concerned that this review could potentially lead to the Council losing its planning powers via the backdoor. The Committee concurred with the Lead Member's views on this and asked that the draft letter, appended as Appendix 2, be amended to reflect the following points - with the point relating to potential loss of planning powers appearing early on in the letter, prior to its submission to Cabinet for approval.

- The Minister's statement on the future of the National Park Authorities as Planning Authorities and a reduction in the number of Planning Authorities in Wales is interpreted as an indirect way of taking the responsibility for planning away from Denbighshire. Whilst there is support for a more resilient planning system, equipped

with specialist skills, the Committee believe that system is best placed in the Local Authority;

- The change of name from 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' to 'National Landscapes of Wales' was unnecessary and would result in confusion. Further that the new name did not express either the descriptive or emotive values of the landscapes. Also, on the national stage, the designation would no longer sit easily with the family of AONBs in England and Northern Ireland. The costs involved in changing the name and infrastructure associated with the change - specifically signage and the message that would send out in times of austerity was also questioned;
- Members felt that the current designation name, governance and other operational structures for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB were more than adequate and the 'status quo' should be preserved;
- any proposals relating to changes in designation should be put on hold until the new local government map for Wales was known and the proposals relating to future local government structures in Wales were clearer.

Whilst there were potential advantages of having a single 'designation' for areas of natural beauty, particularly if the finances currently available to National Parks became available for all areas of 'National Landscapes of Wales', Members were firmly of the view that now was not the appropriate time to implement such changes. The future local government map for Wales and the structures to support it needed to be agreed first. Following a detailed discussion the Committee:-

RESOLVED – *that subject to the inclusion of the above points in the draft response, to recommend the approval of Denbighshire County Council's official response to the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales Stage 2 call for evidence.*

9 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator (SC), 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.

A copy of the 'Member's proposal form' had been included in Appendix 2, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included at Appendix 3, and a table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 4.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings, Appendix 1, and the following amendments and additions were agreed:-

25th June, 2015:- Members agreed that the respective Lead Members be invited to attend the meeting for consideration of the three business items listed in the forward work programme.

30th July, 2015:- Councillor J. Butterfield referred to the Denbighshire Communities First Cluster Report, and requested the inclusion of a special report on the Rhyl Adventure Playground. Councillor Butterfield suggested that details be provided in relation to:-

- the Council's involvement with the project.
- responsibility for the running, managing and funding of the facility.
- the number of employed and volunteer staff involved, and confirmation of CRB checks having been undertaken.

The DoSS and SC agreed to pursue the issues raised and questions presented by Members regarding the Rhyl Adventure Playground.

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) had met on the 2nd April. In response to an officer request from the Committee agreed to include in its forward work programme for October, 2015, an item to consider a report on Denbighshire's Supporting People Local Plan 2016/19, Appendix 1 to the report.

At its March, 2015 meeting the Committee resolved to arrange a special meeting with representatives from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB). Representatives from BCUHB had now confirmed their availability to attend the meeting on the 17th September, 2015.

The Committee had invited North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority to attend its July meeting to discuss the impact and effectiveness of the Council's increased contribution to the Fire and Rescue Authority's annual budget. However, they had felt that it would be inappropriate to attend in July as they would be consulting on their Risk Reduction Plan during the autumn. Consequently the business item had provisionally been rescheduled for presentation in November, 2015.

Following Annual Council on the 12th May, 2015 the Scrutiny Committees had been requested to appoint/re-appoint Members to serve on the Service Challenge Groups. Appendix 5 provided the current list of Committee representatives.

It was noted that some of the service names had changed during the last year. Members of the Labour Group explained that due to uncertainty regarding future membership of the Committee from their Group they would be unable to submit nominations. The following nominations were agreed:-

- Councillor T.M. Parry:- Highways and Environmental Services.
- Councillor M.LI. Davies:- Legal, HR and Democratic Services.
- Councillor J.R. Bartley:- Planning and Public Protection.

Following further discussion, it was:-

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

10 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

No reports from Committee representatives had been received.

Meeting ended at 12.10 p.m.