

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl LL18 3DP on Thursday, 26 November 2015 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Raymond Bartley (Vice-Chair), Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Meirick Davies, Martyn Holland, Pat Jones, Dewi Owens, Pete Prendergast and Arwel Roberts

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (RM), Head of Community Support Services (PG), Service Manager: Specialist Services (AP), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RW) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

Also in attendance:

Deputy Chief Fire Officer – Dawn Docx
Assistant chief Fire Officer – Ruth Simmons, and
Sian Clark, Welsh Audit Officer to observe proceedings.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and also thanked the Fire and Rescue Service personnel for their attendance.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bill Tasker

Apologies for absence were also received from the Corporate Director: Communities and the Lead Member, Councillor Bobby Feeley.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 8 October, 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that, the Minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 October, 2015 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Dawn Docx and Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Ruth Simmons were in attendance to present the consultation document "Your Services, Your Choices".

The Fire and Rescue Service officers outlined the success of their proactive prevention approach during recent years in reducing the number of callouts for the Service by 50%. However, dwindling public finances in recent years had necessitated the Service to cut back on a number of non-statutory services it provided i.e. it had reduced the number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) undertaken annually from 30,000 per year to 20,000 per year, withdrawal of line rescue services (now undertaken by Mountain Rescue Services) and large animal rescue. It had also streamlined its operational management structure and was now operating with 28 operational middle managers across North Wales, this was the minimum number it was permitted to operate. The policy relating to routinely turning out to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) had been revised as part of cost saving measures. The Service now did not turn out to AFAs at business premises during the daytime, unless the alarm had been followed up by an emergency call. Since the introduction of this policy the Service had not attended 640 of the 685 AFA calls received. This had realised a saving of circa £70K. As part of last year's budget setting process the Authority had proposed an increase of £1 per head of population in North Wales when setting the contribution from each local authority. At the conclusion of that process the increase levied equated to 18p per head of population.

In its consultation document the Fire and Rescue Authority was proposing four objectives for 2016/17 and beyond:

Objective 1: to continue with its prevention work to keep people safe from fire in their homes – this would be funded from Welsh Government (WG) grants available specifically for this type of work

Objective 2: working hard to make the budget go further so that it would not have to ask county councils for any higher contributions – this would mean that the Authority would be freezing its budget for the next 3 years. Whilst doing this it would be working collaboratively with public services in the area with a view to utilising available resources to realise maximum benefits for all concerned.

Objective 3: continuing to protect all communities through better planning i.e. match crewing systems and crews' availability in order to provide optimum coverage for the entire area

Objective 4: exploring the possibility of doing more things for communities i.e. co-responding with the Ambulance Service and supporting personal safety initiatives and work with other public services.

A short video was played to members to illustrate how data could be used with a view to improve service planning and provision for the future. Potential future service models would be developed using a well-established formula used by a number of rural Fire and Rescue Authorities and having regard to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). The application of this formula highlighted that

there were areas across North Wales that would require fire and rescue service cover at specific times of the day.

Responding to members questions Fire and Rescue Authority officers advised that:

- the Service was required by law to respond to road traffic accidents;
- water rescue was not a statutory requirement at present, nevertheless due to the number of flooding incidents in North Wales in recent years the Authority had decided to continue with the provision of this service;
- the recruitment of retained firefighters had been extremely difficult, particularly in some areas. This was a common problem amongst rural fire and rescue services. There was on average a 10% annual turnover of Retained Duty Staff (RDS) in North Wales. This was a much higher turnover rate than for Whole Time Firefighters (WTF). There were a variety of reasons for this i.e. the array of skills that required to be mastered, time commitment requirements and problems in combining firefighting commitments with professional and family duties;
- entry and fitness tests for WTF and RDS firefighters were identical;
- whilst the number of firefighters in the area had reduced no WTFs had been made redundant as part of the efficiencies process, nevertheless staff were now working more flexibly;
- a new more peripatetic staffing approach had been adopted to ensure that the Service had adequate cover for the entire area at all times;
- all emergency calls received had been responded to by the Service;

Fire and Rescue Authority officials:

- outlined the process followed to track appliances to incidents and the work underway on an all-Wales basis to design suitable off-road fire appliances that could carry sufficient amounts of water;
- confirmed that due to the costs involved with training RDS firefighters, the Authority, when recruiting them, would establish whether interested individuals would be available to the Authority when the Service required them;
- informed members of the time commitment and distance from fire stations requirements for RDS staff;
- advised of the optimum and safe crewing numbers for fire appliances;
- confirmed that 7 fire stations, operating a variety of duty systems, would by mid-December 2015 be commencing a 6 month co-responding pilot with the Ambulance Service. This was part of a UK-wide pilot which would be used to inform future service delivery;
- advised that discussions and scoping work was underway with North Wales Police on other potential 'blue light services' collaboration opportunities. The Fire and Rescue Service and Police in North Wales had occupied a shared Control Centre for some years, therefore there were opportunities to work together for the benefit of residents.

The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority emphasised the need for all county councillors to act as 'eyes and ears' for their communities and draw to the Fire and Rescue Service's attention any individuals within their wards and communities who may be at risk of harm from fire or other hazards, as this would enable the Service

to undertake proactive work with a view to keeping those individuals safe. Members and local authority officers' attention was drawn to items such as fire retardant bed packs which were available from the Service with a view to keeping smokers who were confined to their beds safe from fires. Officers undertook to draw these and other resources available from the Fire and Rescue Service to the attention of the Single Point of Access Service (SPoA).

Officers undertook to utilise the Council's social media pages for the purpose of drawing the consultation exercise to residents' attention and seeking them to send their comments to the Authority by 11 December 2015. They also undertook to distribute the 'Station Incidents Statistics' provided to the Committee to Committee members.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

RESOLVED to support the objectives detailed in the 'Your Services, Your Choices' consultation document to maintain excellent, affordable fire and rescue services in North Wales in 2016-17 and beyond emphasising the need to ensure adequate safe cover for rural as well as urban areas.

At this juncture (10.30 a.m.) there was a 15 minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 10.45 a.m.

6 ANNUAL REPORT ON ADULT PROTECTION 2014/2015

The Head of Community Support Services introduced the Annual Report on Adult Protection 2014/2015 (previously circulated) to provide Members with an overview of the local safeguarding and adult protection arrangements and practices.

The Head of Community Support Services advised the Committee that the Council was required by statute to report annually on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA). He also advised:-

- that at present there was only one national Performance Indicator (PI) relating to adult protection. However, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, when it comes into force in April 2016 would put adult protection on a statutory footing, similar to that afforded to child protection at present. Its implementation would also entail additional PIs in the area of adult protection;
- of the implications to the Council of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Supreme Court Judgement and the increased number of standard authorisation requests received as a result of the Judgement;
- that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in its Annual Performance Evaluation Report on the Council's Social Care Services for 2014/15 had identified POVA as an area for improvement. The Council had identified four areas within the field of adult protection which required to be strengthened, these were detailed in paragraph 4.15 of the report. CSSIW

inspectors had been briefed on these areas and seemed to be content with the Council's plans for improvement;

- some further training was required for Designated Lead Managers (DLMs) in order to build up their confidence when chairing meetings which involved healthcare professionals.

The following issues were raised by Members:-

- the difficulties encountered by those in the nursing and care professions due to the laws relating to nursing and care being changed on a regular basis;
- the need for residential/care homes to consider dual registration due to the increase demand for elderly mental health care services. Having homes with dual registration, as residential care and nursing care homes, would then ensure that residents would not be subject to stress and upheaval as their needs increased as they would not have to move from one home to another in order to meet their growing needs;
- the need for a community-led approach to caring for the elderly and vulnerable and the potential use of Council facilities, such as libraries, for elderly, vulnerable or lonely individuals to meet others;
- the need for ward members to be vigilant with respect to possible abuse of elderly or vulnerable people within the community.

Responding to Members' questions, Officers:-

- detailed the process, as set out by law, which had to be followed when dealing with standard authorisation requests under the DoLS judgement and confirmed that the costs of each DoLS assessment had to be met by the local authority;
- emphasised the pressures faced by social care services due to DoLS requests, both financially and resource wise – due to the fact that the Service had to deal with both current and retrospective requests, whilst at the same time having to contend with budget cuts. This problem was not unique to Denbighshire and the Law Commission had recently been asked to examine the problems and pressures caused. Their report was due to published in early 2016;
- advised that there was a growing need for dementia care, whilst the demand for residential care was reducing;
- emphasised that POVA investigations could entail distressing experiences for all concerned, particularly when the allegations made were false;
- confirmed that whilst the number of abuse allegations were increasing across the country, the cause of this was increased awareness which resulted in more alleged incidents being reported.

Prior to the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee Members requested that a presentation on "Loneliness and its Implications" be presented to a future Council Briefing.

With a view to ensuring that the risks identified by the CSSIW relating to POVA were addressed, and that the Council was aware of the types of alleged abuse and the locations where they had occurred, the Committee:-

RESOLVED:-

- a) Subject to the above observations, to receive the Annual Report on Adult Protection 2014/2015;
- b) To acknowledge the important nature of a corporate approach to Adult Protection and the responsibility of the Council to view this as a key priority area and place it alongside the commitment and significance given by Denbighshire County Council to Child Protection; and
- c) That a report be presented to the Committee at its meeting in February 2016 detailing the number of Protection of Vulnerable Adults investigations undertaken with respect to various locations and types of services, the types of alleged and proven abuse, the measures taken to address proven allegations and to reduce risks to other individuals as well as to the Council itself.

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 members with an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

A copy of the “member proposal form” had been included in Appendix 2, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 3, a table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 4 and a list of Scrutiny representatives on Service Challenge Groups 2015/2016 included as Appendix 5.

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for future meetings and the following amendments/additions were agreed:-

It was agreed by Members that a visit to the new One Stop Shop in Rhyl would be advantageous at some point in the future.

25 February 2016: Protection of Vulnerable Adults – Update report, detailing number of POVA investigations undertaken with respect to the various locations and types of services, the types of alleged and proven abuse, the measures taken to address proven allegations and to reduce risks to other individuals as well as to the Council itself.

Future Meeting 2016: The HASCAS report on Tawelfan would be available in the spring of 2016. Once the report had been published, it would be presented to the Committee.

There were two vacancies on the Service Challenge Group List. It was agreed that:

- (i) Martyn Holland represent Partnerships Scrutiny on the Education Services, and
- (ii) Jeanette Chamberlain Jones represent Partnerships Scrutiny on the Highways & Environmental Services.

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

The next Partnerships Scrutiny meeting will take place on 14 January 2016.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m.