

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 4 February 2016 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Bill Cowie, Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Chair), Martyn Holland, Rhys Hughes (Vice-Chair), Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Anton Sampson, Cefyn Williams and Cheryl Williams.

Councillors Alice Jones, Dewi Owens and Arwel Roberts attended as observers.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (RM), Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW), Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (AS), Strategic Planning and Performance Officer (IM), Democratic Services Manager (SP), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE), WAO Officers (SC) and (CO) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Blakeley and Peter Evans

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 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.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on the 17th December, 2015 were submitted:-

***RESOLVED** – that the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

5 WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

A copy of a briefing paper for Scrutiny Members, Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

A Member Workshop was held to present this business item. The Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation (HBIM) introduced the report which briefly described the key issues in the new legislation which had a particular impact on the Local Authority. It highlighted areas where Denbighshire was well ahead in its preparation and suggested considerations on a service by service basis, and provided confirmation that the Wales Audit Office (WAO) would be inspecting Denbighshire's implementation of the duties under the Act as part of their next Corporate Assessment in the autumn of 2016. The report included a risk register and concluded with a number of recommendations for services. Details pertaining to the Council's proposals to conform with the requirements of the new Act were also outlined.

The briefing paper posed the following questions and highlighted the following areas which were summarised by the HBIM:-

- What is Act?
- What is our desired approach to the Act?
- The timetable meeting the Act's requirements
- What is different under the Act? – Details of the seven Well-being goals had been provided in the report.
- The seven Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle of the Act – Five questions and considerations to which the Authority would need to be able answer in order to demonstrate that the Principle had been applied.
- The Good News – what Denbighshire was already doing that would meet the Act's requirements
- Suggested considerations for individual services as prepared for the Act's implementation
- Impact on Regulation – what Regulators would be looking for with respect to the Council's planning for the Act's implementation
- The recommendations and work being progressed by Denbighshire County Council as it prepares for the Act's implementation.

With the aid of a video and PowerPoint Presentation the HBIM provided a summary of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which included the following issues and areas pertinent to Denbighshire:-

- What difference will the Act make to Denbighshire's communities?
- Group Work
- Scrutiny Roles
- Communities Scrutiny Work
- The Sustainable Development Principle
- Scrutiny Model Answer
- Conclusions

Members of the Committee formed two groups to discuss and consider the five questions and considerations pertaining to the Sustainable Development Principle, and the effect of the Act on the Authority. The HBIM provided details of the model answers which could be have been provided by Members during their deliberation. He explained that the Act emphasised the need for all public sector bodies to change the emphasis of their business planning and service delivery from the local

to the global, and from short/medium term to long-term i.e. 35 years. Such a substantial step change would require all public bodies to re-align their work in future and work far more closely together for the benefit of the citizen.

The following questions and comments were submitted by Members:-

- Good practices pertaining to the Act were noted by Members.
- Many of the proposals were already being addressed and undertaken.
- The legislative nature of the Act raised concerns.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the central control afforded to Welsh Government.
- The level of powers held by the Commissioner were questioned.
- The difference between “holding to account” and scrutiny with regard to the delivery of service provision was questioned.
- It was felt that reference to the Welsh language and culture should not be accentuated through solely through sports, it should be an integral part of each well-being goal.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the adoption of a process for the appointment of Advisory Panel Members.
- requested details on the costs to the Authority in respect of the Commissioner and his related activities.

The officers provided the following responses to questions and issues raised by Members:-

- The Commissioner’s powers would not be as prescriptive as anticipated, and a review of the approach to the Act could be undertaken by the Commissioner.
- There would be local scrutiny in respect of the Act.
- The new Public Service Board (PSB), which would replace the Local Service Board (LSB), would be subject to scrutiny, and their potential functions were outlined.
- Under the Act local authority scrutiny committees would be expected to hold public bodies to account in line with the Act’s well-being goals and the Sustainable Development principle;
- Collaborative working with Conwy County Borough Council had been undertaken through the Local Services Board, and would ultimately be undertaken through the Public Service Board dependent upon the outcome of the Local Government reorganization;
- The role of the Authority in complying with the requirements of the Act was provided, and it was considered that there would be no significant staffing related costs to the Council.
- Consideration be afforded by staff at all levels to the implementation of the Act, and consideration of the possible need for change to meet its requirements.
- Training provision would be provided following the appointment of newly Elected Members on the Act and its requirements;
- The impact of the Act on the Planning process and decision making procedure would be subject to the Sustainable Development Principle, which could be utilised as a checklist.

- The three main strands pertaining to the impact of the Act were outlined by the HLHRS. He also advised that more clarity was required from the Welsh Government (WG) on how different pieces of recent legislation dove-tailed together;
- Membership details pertaining to the proposed new joint Conwy Denbighshire Public Service Board was provided by the HBIM.

Prior to concluding the workshop officers emphasised that the Council as a whole would need to ponder on how the Act will affect how the Authority takes decision, and the long-term effect of those decisions on residents. Scrutiny may in future, when determining its forward work programme bear in mind the 7 well-being goals, and when examining topics to focus on the following areas:

- Long-term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration; and
- Involvement of residents/service-users

Following further discussion Members thanked all the officers for explaining the Act's requirements and expectations to them and for answering their questions.

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator, which requested the Committee to review and agree its forward work programme and which 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 as 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:-

24th March, 2016:- The Committee agreed with a suggestion by the Chair that, if there was only the one item for consideration at the meeting, the requirement to hold the meeting may be reviewed.

The Scrutiny Coordinator confirmed that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group had met on the 21st January, 2016. In accordance with the Group's recent decision on the mechanism to deal with national reports published by WAO it had requested that the Committee consider the findings of the national study on leisure services and their implications for Denbighshire. The Group had agreed that this item be included in the Committee's forward work programme for the May, 2016 meeting. As part of the preparatory work for that meeting Members were asked to read the WAO report, 'Delivering with less – Leisure Services'. The Chair emphasised the significance and importance of the Act in relation to the future delivery of services by the Council.

In response to a request from Councillor W. Mullen-James the Committee agreed that a follow-up report, in respect of grass cutting issues, should be included in a scrutiny committee's forward work programme. A number of Members suggested possible business items for inclusion in the Committee's forward work programme, and the Scrutiny Coordinator offered assistance to them with completing the Member Proposal Forms for consideration by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group. The items referred to included:-

- GPs Out of Hours Service.
- the new Rhyl High School complex.

The Scrutiny Coordinator advised that the Sustainable Development Principle and the Well-being Goals could be included in the Information Brief document in future with a view to assisting members to focus on them when discussing subjects, until such time as a new report template had been introduced. Members also agreed that they be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group.

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

7 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor M.L. Holland had attended the Tackling Poverty Working Group meeting, held on the 3rd February, 2016, where poverty related issues across the County had been discussed. Councillor Holland informed the Committee that he had raised the matter of pupil attendance records at schools.

Councillor W.L. Cowie had attended the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 22nd January, 2016. Councillor Cowie informed the Committee that the HLHRDS had provided a detailed presentation on the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

RESOLVED – that the reports be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 11.50 p.m.