

## **PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 20 December 2018 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (Chair), Gareth Davies, Pat Jones, Christine Marston, Melvyn Mile, Andrew Thomas, Rhys Thomas and Emrys Wynne

**Cabinet Lead Members** – Councillor Tony Thomas attended for agenda item 5. Councillor Mark Young attended for agenda item 6.

**Observer** - Councillor Graham Timms

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Corporate Director: Economy & Public Realm (GB)(substitute for Corporate Director: Communities (NS) ); AONB Officer (HS); Countryside & Heritage Services Manager (HR); Community Partnership Manager (ST); Scrutiny Coordinator (RE), and Committee Administrator (SLW).

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joan Butterfield, Hugh Irving and David Williams

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Christine Marston declared a personal interest in item 5 as she is a member of the AONB Partnership.

Councillor Melvyn Mile declared a personal interest in item 5 as he is the AONB Champion for Llangollen Town Council.

Councillor Emrys Wynne declared a personal interest in item 6 due to his role as a Magistrate.

### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

No urgent matters had been raised.

The Committee requested the Chair to convey their best wishes to Councillor Joan Butterfield for a speedy recovery.

### **4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 8 November 2018, were submitted.

***RESOLVED*** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

**5 CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) MANAGEMENT PLAN AND LA PLANS AND UPDATE ON CURRENT COLLECTIVE WORK BY THE AONBS OF WALES UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Howard Sutcliffe (Countryside Operations Manager) and Huw Rees (Countryside and Heritage Services Manager) to the meeting for discussion on Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plans.

The Lead Member for Housing, Regulation and the Environment, Councillor Tony Thomas, introduced the AONB Officer's report and appendices (previously circulated) which briefed the Committee on the relationship between the AONB's Management Plan and the Council's various plans and strategies. He also advised that the report updated members on the discussions currently taking place between officers of the five AONBs in Wales, the National Association of AONBs, National Resources Wales (NRW) and Welsh Government (WG), in addition to information on the English review of national parks and AONBs.

Members were informed by the Lead Member and AONB Officer that of the five AONBS in Wales three were located in North Wales, and of those whose entire land area was in Wales the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB was the largest. The AONB's primary purpose was to conserve and enhance the area's landscape in accordance with the requirements of Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. As the AONB's geographic area spanned areas of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham a Joint Committee, on which two Cabinet members from each council served, had been established to ensure that the three local authorities complied with their statutory duties. A further three non-executive members from each council served on the AONB's Partnership group. Despite the fact that the majority of the designated AONB area lay within Denbighshire's boundary all three authorities were equal members of the Joint Committee and contributed an equal amount of money to its budget to cover staffing costs etc. The AONB's Management Plan, which it had a statutory duty to develop and manage, had been produced and published in 2014.

Members were advised that AONB officers worked closely with the Council's Planning Department to ensure that planning applications complied with statutory conservation obligations. They also worked closely with the Council's Countryside Services and its Housing Services in relation to the health and well-being agenda and promoting healthier lifestyles. They emphasised that a number of the AONB's plans aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan and supported the delivery of various corporate priorities - the black grouse, curlew, little terns and heather projects all supported the work to deliver the corporate priority relating to the environment. Whilst funding sourced to undertake work on other projects, such as the square at Llangollen, developing a community shop in the old school in Llandegla and the work of the Raven community pub in Llanarmon-yn-Iâl all contributed towards the realisation of the connected communities and resilient

communities priorities. The delivery of these projects relied heavily on AONB personnel and volunteers.

Responding to members questions the Lead Member, Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm, Countryside and Heritage Services Manager and the AONB Officer:

- assured the Committee that Denbighshire did benefit from the fact that the Offa's Dyke National Trail spanned the entire length of the AONB area from Prestatyn to Chirk. The fact that there was a railway station at Prestatyn, the end of the Trail if the journey had started from Chepstow was in itself a bonus as it provided walkers with easy accessible transport provision at the end of their journey. The AONB received funding from NRW to undertake maintenance on the Trail and to work with other groups, such as the Clwydian Range Tourism Group on tourism related initiatives linked to the Trail i.e. support applications for the development of barn conversions as holiday accommodation etc. whilst ensuring that no major developments were permitted that would have a detrimental effect on the area;
- confirmed that the AONB's observations on planning applications were reported in Planning Committee or Lead Member Delegated Decision reports. Large applications, such as the Windfarms or large developments etc. would be presented to the Planning Committee for consideration. The AONB's observations would also be reported to the Planning Committee in the report. Whilst the report may only include a summary of the AONB's response members could ask to see the response in its entirety if they so wished;
- advised that the minutes of the AONB's Joint Committee, the AONB Partnership and its themed working groups were available to the public. The minutes of the themed working groups were published with the committee papers for AONB Partnership meetings;
- confirmed that the AONB offered opportunities for young people through its Young Ranger programmes and through its voluntary health projects. Officers also visited schools to promote these opportunities and the AONB in general;
- advised that whilst the Colomendy outdoor pursuits centre at Loggerheads was no longer operated by Liverpool City Council, pupils from the city's schools continued to attend courses there which were now run by Kingswood;
- confirmed that the Community Miles leaflets published by the AONB in conjunction with the Council's Countryside Services were available in a number of different outlets within the AONB, as well as in libraries and Tourist Information Centres (TICs). Due to dwindling public funds these leaflets, which had been available free of charge, would now cost 50p to purchase. The purpose for charging this small fee was to enable libraries to generate some income;
- advised that located within the AONB were a number of Council assets. These were mainly assets which had been transferred into the Council's ownership on local authority reorganisation e.g. the Dysert to Prestatyn Way, Prestatyn Hillside, Loggerheads etc.;
- gave an overview of the £700K Sustainable Management Scheme operated along the northern coastal belt of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire which

included the use of Carneddau ponies to graze the sand dunes. When the ponies were not required to graze the dunes they were used elsewhere in the area i.e. the Aberduna Nature Reserve in Maeshafn in the AONB. This Management scheme included funding from NRW towards water and fencing management programmes;

- confirmed that their vision was for the AONB to continue its close working relationship with the local authorities, as they felt that this approach worked well in north east Wales;
- advised that biodiversity was at the core of the AONB's vision for the area. Its work focussed on the area's landscape, a healthy upland moorland with heather habitat inhabited by native species of flora, fauna and wildlife. Working closely with farmers and graziers traditional 'ffridd' land could be reintroduced with controlled burning practices used to control bracken and help nurture the upland habitat;
- confirmed that a Biodiversity Officer had been appointed to help the Council to fulfil its duties to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems in accordance with the requirements of Part 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This work was cross-cutting and would include input into the Authority's highways grass verge cutting programme, work to maintain and increase the black grouse, little tern and adders population etc. which would in turn support the delivery of the Council's corporate priority relating to the environment;
- advised that AONB officers worked closely with the Conwy and Denbighshire Local Access Forum. If they became aware of individuals, business or organisations who were interested in delivering environmental/wildlife experiences i.e. activities or holidays they would support them by assisting them to contact the Local Access Forum and access potential funding sources to assist them to establish their businesses;
- confirmed that the moorland fire on Llantysilio Mountain during the summer of 2018 has caused some medium to long-term damage to the ecosystem in the area. It would take some considerable time for the mountain habitat to recover and for indigenous species to return. Whilst green shoots could be seen at present on the mountain, this was mainly bracken which in itself could cause further problems if not properly managed. An application for funding had been submitted with a view to resourcing remedial work on the mountain. Communities Scrutiny Committee would be holding a special meeting examining the fire and its impact during the Spring of 2019;
- advised that AONB officers regularly assisted and supported farmers and graziers in relation to land management matters to ensure that they, visitors and tourists gained maximum benefits from the local environment. They also worked with the Council's Economic Development Team and individual businesses in a bid to ensure that small businesses maximised their income through their participation in schemes such as the Stay, Eat, local campaigns etc.;
- drew members' attention to the collective response prepared by Wales' five AONB officers to the WG's Minister for Environment's consultation on Greater Parity for AONBs with the National Parks in Wales, a copy of which was appended to the report, and outlined each of the twelve points raised in the document;

- confirmed that if legislative changes were to be proposed as a result of the WG's above consultation a White Paper would be published, which would be the subject of further consultation. It would probably be at least two years before any changes would come into force; and
- advised that the WG had given a commitment to 'green' energy and designated areas where 'green' energy should be produced, particularly relating to where large scale wind turbines farms should be located. The Government was now focussing on community benefits that should be realised from 'green' energy projects i.e. the hydro scheme in Corwen which benefited the local community in the town, the large community benefit funds that would shortly become available for communities affected by the Brenig and Clocaenog windfarms, where circa £170K and £750K respectively per annum would be available for community projects for the next 25 years. Consultation was currently underway in relation to these schemes, including which communities should benefit, the types of projects to be funded, support to be made available to communities to apply for funding and fund administration. Members agreed that these funds merited being considered for scrutiny at a later date and the Committee asked Councillor Rhys Thomas to complete a 'member proposal form' on the Committee's behalf and submit it to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) for consideration;

Whilst not in the AONB members requested that officers enquire on the current situation regarding the 7 acres of land in the Bruton Park area of Rhyl, which had been bequeathed to local residents, and proposals to designate it as a nature reserve.

Members congratulated and commended the Council's Countryside Officer for the north of the county and his team on the excellent conservation and public engagement work they undertake in the area.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

***RESOLVED: - having considered the Plan, subject to the above observations and the Lead Member and officers undertaking the actions identified, confirmed that it was assured that the Plan's aims and objectives supported and complemented the Council's vision and aspirations for the area***

For consideration of the following item of business the Committee acted in its capacity as the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee in accordance sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

## **6 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL UPDATE FOR 2017-2018**

The Chair welcomed Sian Taylor (Community Safety Partnership Manager) to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Corporate Standards introduced the Community Safety Manager's report and appendices (previously circulated) which presented the

Committee with the Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) Annual Update for 2017-2018. During his introduction the Lead Member informed the Committee that the North Wales Safer Communities Board (NWSCB) was responsible for agreeing the priorities for the region and drawing up an action plan for each CSP to deliver. The delivery of these plans was regularly monitored by the NWSCB, with the local CSP analysing its performance in delivering the plan for its area and devising local solution to local problems.

The CSP Manager advised that 2017-18 had been a challenging year financially for the CSP locally, and its performance in delivering its action plan in the Denbighshire area had been good overall.

Responding to members' questions the Lead Member, Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm and the CSP Manager:

- agreed that whilst the wording for Priority 1 for 2017-18 'Reduce Crime and Disorder in the Area' seemed to outline the whole purpose of the CSP, it was important to focus on the prioritised actions identified in a bid to realise this ambition for that particular year. Reducing crime and disorder would always be the CSP's ambition and its ultimate aspiration;
- advised that reducing the number of domestic violence incidents was a CSP priority, as well as a priority for the WG and the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales. It also featured in the Council's Corporate Plan as part of the Resilient Communities corporate priority. It was important to bear in mind that for crimes to be investigated it was essential for them to be reported. The success of efforts made to encourage people to report incidents of crime did have a negative impact on the statistics with the number of incidents reported being higher in a number of areas. However, whilst this did seem perverse it did assist officers to identify patterns or trends and try to devise potential solutions to address the root of the problems and mitigate against any further increases in future;
- advised that Barnardo's had undertaken a lot of work in relation to educating people, particularly young people on what was and was not acceptable in a relationship, with a view to reducing domestic violence;
- advised that the Regional Domestic Abuse Strategy was available for members to read on the Council's website. All Council staff had undertaken an on-line training module on domestic violence and it was hoped to roll-out this module to elected members in the new year. Over 200 people had attended an event at Rhyl Town Hall aimed at raising awareness of domestic abuse in its various guises and how those affected could seek support and help. All domestic abuse services were in attendance as well as the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB). The CSP was keen to arrange similar events in future but at present did not have the capacity to hold them on a regular basis. One potential method for future awareness raising events may be by having a presence at conferences/events organised by partner organisations i.e. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, North Wales Police etc.;
- agreed to provide members with details of the statistical information which accompanied the 2017-18 annual performance report;
- confirmed that advice had been shared with residents on how to deal with telephone scams etc. at multi-agency community engagement events held and via social media. The Police were well aware of the problems and

anxiety caused by such scams, particularly to vulnerable individuals. Such scams also tied-up valuable Police resources;

- acknowledged that the non-emergency Police telephone number, 101, was experiencing problems and that the Police were aware of the matter;
- advised that a multi-agency approach was being used in a bid to reduce various types of crimes i.e. young people using bicycles irresponsibly and endangering themselves and others, reoffending, substance misuse etc.;
- advised that the 'county lines' drug operations and modern day slavery were extremely complex areas which required specialist Police personnel to investigate and address. These complex investigations were extremely time consuming. The CSP and its partner organisations focussed their resources more on prevention work with children, young people and vulnerable groups in a bid to raise their awareness of the dangers of getting involved with illegal substances. CSP and Safeguarding officers worked closely in a bid to protect the vulnerable from the perpetrators of these crimes, as drug-users themselves were victims of the drug dealers crimes;
- confirmed that statements made in recent months by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable in relation to drug use in the area had not in any way hindered the CSP's work;
- advised that the CSP was actively working with local authority trading standards departments in relation to raising the public's awareness and their responsibility to purchase quality goods with a view to reducing opportunities for individuals to exploit vulnerable people through modern day slavery practices to produce sub-standard goods at very low prices. The poor quality of some of these goods could potentially pose a health and safety risk to the purchaser or whoever received them;
- gave an overview of how safeguarding procedures would be instigated if concerns were drawn to a CSP partner's attention about the safety of a vulnerable person. Similarly if it became apparent that a looked after child (LAC) was at risk of any harm all CSP Safeguarding Leads would be alerted and a multi-agency response would be initiated. This would involve all relevant agencies i.e. Police, Social Services, Education, Health, Foster parents etc.;
- acknowledged that safeguarding and protecting a child from harm was far easier during school hours than outside school hours. Nevertheless the Council could not afford to be complacent in this area and had acknowledged the need to continually improve its safeguarding work despite budgetary pressures. The Corporate Parenting Forum had an important role to play in safeguarding matters. Members referred to an excellent presentation on Safeguarding given to the Corporate Parenting Forum and asked that it be shown to all members in the near future;
- advised that the CSP did work closely with schools in a bid to identify pupils who were at risk of getting involved in anti-social behaviour etc., with a view to providing proactive intervention work to steer them away from entering the criminal justice system;
- confirmed that the restorative justice approach applied by the Police, courts and Youth Justice Service (YJS) had the potential to pay dividends for the individual as well as society in general; and

- confirmed that the Police had requested a meeting with the CSP with a view to addressing the nuisance caused by individuals begging in public places. It was anticipated that CSP agencies could focus their efforts to raise public awareness of how to respond to people begging and to support those individuals who were currently begging to access services that would help them become financially independent, whilst releasing the Police to focus on those individuals who displayed aggressive begging tendencies or were acting in a fraudulent capacity;

Members acknowledged the complexities involved with the ‘county lines’ illegal substance misuse work and the resources the Police etc. had to devote to it. Nevertheless, they felt that it was very difficult for them to explain to residents that the drug-users who were causing a problem in the communities were themselves victims.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

***RESOLVED:*** - subject to the above observations and the provision of the requested information to receive and acknowledge the contents of the Community Safety Partnership’s performance report for 2017-18 and its Project/Partnership Activity Plan for 2018-19

## 7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members’ review of the Committee’s work programme and provided an update on relevant issues.

14 February 2019

- Future Environmental Crime Enforcement Options
- CCTV Partnership
- Support for Young Carers in Denbighshire

It was agreed to invite the relevant Lead Cabinet Members to attend.

Appendix 2 – Member Proposal Form. Members were encouraged to complete the form for any items to be presented to Scrutiny Committee. Upon receipt the proposal would be discussed at Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group.

***RESOLVED*** that, subject to the above, the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

## 8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair, Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, reported upon her attendance at the Customers, Communication and Marketing Service Challenge. It was confirmed the notes of the meeting would be circulated to members upon receipt.

Councillor Christine Marston confirmed she had attended the Planning & Public Protection Service Challenge. Again, it was confirmed the notes of the meeting would be circulated to members once available.

***RESOLVED*** *that the verbal reports be received and noted.*

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair, Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

**The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.**