

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by Video Conference on Thursday, 26 October 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield (Chair), Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Kelly Clewett, Pauline Edwards, Brian Jones, Terry Mendies, Arwel Roberts, David Williams and Elfed Williams

Lead Member- Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Rhys Thomas was in attendance at the Committee's invitation.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director- Governance and Business (GW), Head of Corporate Support Services - Performance, Digital & Assets (HVE), Strategic Planning Team Manager (NK), Community Safety Partnership Manager (ST), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE), and Committee Administrators (SJ and NH).

North Wales Police Representative: Kevin Smith (KS), District Inspector for business items 5 and 6.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bobby Feeley.

Apologies were also received from the Corporate Director: Social Services and Education, Nicola Stubbins. Gary Williams, Corporate Director: Governance and Business was therefore in attendance in the role of Corporate Executive Team's (CET) advisor to the Committee.

The Committee was notified that Councillor Peter Scott had resigned his position on the Committee to fulfil his role as Vice-Chair of County Council, following the untimely passing of the Council's elected Chair, the late Councillor Peter Prendergast. The Conservative Group had appointed Councillor Brian Jones to replace Councillor Scott as one of its representatives on the Committee. As a consequence of Councillor Scott's resignation, the office of Committee Vice-Chair was vacant. However, as the notification of the change in membership had been received after the publication of the meeting's business agenda, an item of business to appoint a new Vice-Chair would therefore be included on the Committee's December 2023 business agenda.

The Committee Chair thanked Councillor Peter Scott for his diligent work as Vice-Chair and for all his support to her as Chair. She also extended a warm welcome to Councillor Jones as a member of the Committee.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests of a personal or personal and prejudicial interest were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No matters of an urgent nature had been raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Coordinator prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday, 14 September 2023 were submitted. The Committee:

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

Matters arising:

Page 9, Business item 5, 'North Denbighshire Community Hospital Project' – the Scrutiny Coordinator confirmed that enquiries had been made with the Monitoring Officer on whether any statutory rules existed compelling Welsh Government Ministers to respond to business cases or funding requests within a specific timeframe. The Monitoring Officer had advised that he was not aware of the existence of any statutory timeframes relating to such matters.

Prior to proceeding with the next items of business the Scrutiny Coordinator advised members that:

The Committee would be discussing business items 5 & 6 in its capacity as the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the requirements of sections 19 and 20 of the Police & Justice Act 2006.

5 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL UPDATE FOR 2022/23

The Chair welcomed the Lead Member and officers to the meeting. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced each officer present at the meeting.

The Lead Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Rhys Thomas introduced the annual Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) Annual Report for 2022/23. He welcomed the North Wales Police representative, District Inspector Kevin Smith, to the meeting who was in attendance at the request of the Committee. He reminded Members it was a statutory requirement that an annual report be presented to the Committee.

The Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital & Assets thanked the Lead Member for the introduction and expanded by saying that the report fell under Section 6 of the Crime Disorder Act for an annual report to be prepared, to demonstrate the achievements of the Local Community Safety Partnership.

She introduced Sian Taylor, the Community Safety Partnership Manager to the Committee. Sian worked for Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council.

Three elements were included within the report. Those were:

- To look at the previous year, to provide a performance update and crime statistics.
- To provide information for the current year 2023/24.
- To provide information on the finance and funding of the Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership.

It was highlighted to Members the resources for the CSP were very limited. The Head of Service offered her thanks to Sian and the officers for the work done under the constraints of limited resources.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager thanked the Committee for inviting her to present the paper. She guided members to appendix 1 which detailed the performance report for April 2022- March 2023 for Denbighshire. Members were reminded that there were 3 priority areas that were monitored. With specific targets to achieve. Of the three main priority areas of work for the Community Safety Partnership at the end of March 2023 two were acceptable and the third was good. The reason two had been set as acceptable had been due to an increase in the number of theft and handling, vehicle crime, sexual offences and the youth reoffending rate. It was noted a reduction in all other types of crimes had been recorded.

A brief summary of each priority was provided. The first priority had been to work collectively as a partnership to reduce crime and disorder. Work on victim based crime and community based issues had taken place. Representatives from partners from those areas met to discuss concerns and agree actions. Officers encouraged participation in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) that discussed the high level domestic abuse in order to put in place mitigating actions to safeguard individuals.

The second priority focused on working collectively to reduce the level of reoffending. Partnership working with the Police and Probation Service was vital for this priority to progress. Members were informed of a cross county organised crime group (OCG) which was a partnership group that met monthly to discuss issues such as County Lines crime and ways of combating organised crime in the area.

The third priority looked at the local and regional priorities. Collective working took place when there was a need to manage anti-social behaviour. Often the CSP brought teams together to discuss any joint working that would benefit partners and communities.

Work collectively to raise domestic abuse and sexual abuse awareness continued. Including press releases and initiatives like lighting up local landmarks in white to provide a visual to engage with individuals and raise awareness. Third sector colleagues often attended sports clubs to encourage white ribbon day to gain support for domestic violence not being acceptable.

Members were provided with further detail around some of the key areas of statistics noted in the papers. Members were guided to the data around adult reoffending in Denbighshire, the data showed a reduction in the number of reoffending recorded during the last year. Officers attended offender management partnership meetings. This enabled officers to gain information at those meetings on any emerging issues which would help shape the CSP's approach going forward. 15 less adult repeat offences were recorded during the period. Conwy County Borough Council had seen a greater reduction, Members heard further information had been sought on the type of offence that had been recorded to gain a better understanding of the reduction in Conwy.

A large increase in youth reoffending had been recorded. Members were aware of issues in communities around anti-social behaviour which had in turn reflected on the numbers. Officers had been in contact with the Youth Justice Service to gain further information. Officers were aware of the issues. The yellow card system was still in place, with officers now contacting parents/guardians following the issuing of the first yellow card, not the second card as in previously. Further work around further interventions were ongoing.

It was stressed the team were involved in a wide area of work and attended numerous conferences and partnership meetings. Members were provided with information on some of the work the team were involved in. Members heard a new officer had been employed utilising funds provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Crime Stoppers work called the Fearless Arm of Crime Youth Outreach Worker. His role was aimed at young people having the confidence to report incidents of crime without fear of reprisal, with an emphasis around knife crime. Officers had made contact with the new individual to work with them to look at concerns in the county.

Members were guided through the data chart of the statistics recorded for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Overall the chart was positive. It highlighted some key areas that required further work including sexual offences, vehicle crime, and theft and handling. The two areas of greatest concern were vehicle crime and theft and handling. The current economic pressures were having an impact on the numbers. It was stressed a great deal of work was needed in these fields. Details of the work in each area of increased crime was provided to members, including the work that was being done to reduce the levels of crime in Denbighshire. It was stressed work to educate people and businesses on ways to reduce numbers of crime was ongoing.

The Chair thanked the officers for the detailed introduction and guidance through the comprehensive report. Members were invited to raise any concerns or questions and the following points were discussed in more detail:

- Acquisitive crime did include shop lifting. The cost of living and current economic situation could cause an increase in that sort of crime being committed. The increase in shop theft had often been found in the larger supermarket stores. Work was on going to educate the staff of those stores for best placement of attractive products. It was stressed the increase in theft was seen on a national level with an increase seen across the country. High value thefts had been more frequent with the cost of products rising. Work had been focused to reduce these occurrences. A new initiative named 'we don't buy crime' had been introduced to support the community to reduce acquisitive crime.
- The CCTV Partnership Board was very grateful for the work of the City, Town and Community Councils and support provided towards the Board's work. Police access to the CCTV cameras had to be sought through the current contracted CCTV control room. An application form had to be completed for the footage. Work was currently taking place on a new CCTV Service contract which would be funded using various sources of funding, including, Safer Streets Funding, PCC and Levelling Up monies etc.
- School police officers attended all schools and had a curriculum they adhered to. This was centred around acquisitive crime. Information was provided and contact information of local policing teams and neighbourhood policing teams and youth justice service to support schools and young people.
- Members noted the increase in theft from shops including charity shops and associated the rise with the changes to the current economic climate.
- Members were pleased to hear that the joint working was successful. Members asked if there was any intention to hold a forum in Denbigh to engage with local Councillors and residents. It was an ambition of officers to arrange other forums, it was explained it was often time consuming to find a suitable date and time when majority of partners were available to attend.
- The contract with Cheshire West and Chester County Council for CCTV was on the agenda for the CCTV Partnership Board group meeting. The group was due to discuss the best contract for Denbighshire CCTV. Funding had been sought for a new server in Rhyl which would be of great benefit to Denbighshire. Funding to replace some older cameras had also been pursued.
- The Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership received no direct grants to allocate. Funding was received from the Home Office to the Welsh Government, it was then awarded to North Wales Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner to allocate to projects across North Wales. Regional bids were submitted to receive funding. Officers felt it was right to raise funding as a possible risk going forward. Assurance were provided that the CSP bid for any available funding to support projects and initiatives across the counties. Reliance on close working relationships between partners was vital and officers were grateful for the support they received from partners especially the close working with the Police.
- The District Inspector offered to collate information on various grants and funding awarded by North Wales Police and Community Trust (PACT) charity to projects in Denbighshire during the past twelve months. All external funding and partner support for crime reduction initiatives were

extremely valuable tools with a view to reducing youth crime and engaging with young people.

- Sharing information between the partners and authorities would support the work completed by the Board. The risk would be increased if information was not shared. In Denbighshire a Community Safety and Safeguarding Strategic Group had been implemented to discuss concerns and strengthen partnerships to mitigate risks.
- Good strong relationships between organisations supported the partnership. Community safety incorporated a diverse field of partners and organisations therefore close working between each partner was vital.
- The Lead Member encouraged Members to request presentations and reports at each Member Area Group from local police staff and other partners to discuss projects taking place in each area.
- Members were supportive of data and information of the agencies, organisations and partners being pulled together to provide information quickly and easily.
- Close communication between groups and third sector organisations to ensure clear understanding and support was provided and understood.

The Corporate Director: Governance and Business, offered his thanks to the officers and to Kevin Smith for his attendance. He emphasised how fortunate the authority was to have Sian working in the Community Safety Team.

At the conclusion of an in-depth discussion the Chair and members thanked the Lead Member, the Community Safety Partnership Manager and North Wales Police's representative for an overall positive report and for answering the Committee's questions. It was:

Resolved: subject to the above suggestions and observations, along with the provision of the additional information requested, to -

- (i) acknowledge the Community Safety Partnership's efforts and activity in addressing and reducing crime rates in Denbighshire; and***
- (ii) receive the Partnership's Annual Performance and Statistical Update Report for 2022 to 2023, along with the details provided on its ongoing work, initiatives and funding sources for 2023/2024.***

At this juncture (11.40 am) the meeting paused for a 5 minute comfort break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.45 am.

6 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTH WALES POLICE IN DENBIGHSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES

North Wales Police's representative, Kevin Smith provided members with a verbal update on partnership working with North Wales police within Denbighshire communities.

He provided Members with information on some of the key changes that had taken place in North Wales Police recently. Since the new Chief Constable had taken up position she had been keen to have a restructure of the organisation in relation to how officers worked with partners and engagement with the public. She instigated a review of positions and responsibilities individuals held. He informed members his new role would fall under the title of Neighbourhood Partnerships Inspector. The Chief inspectors had also had a restructure from being County Chief Inspectors to a Patrol Chief Inspector and Neighbourhood and Partnership Chief Inspector. The focus and drive for the team was to demonstrate a commitment to neighbourhood policing and partnership working. It was hoped the new structure would add benefit to the community.

The current neighbourhood policing team which consisted of a number of officers working in rural areas of the authority and more urban areas. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) played a large role in supporting community policing and partnership working. Community police officers could perform any action that any member of the public was permitted to but would act as a professional witness. They also had professional detention powers and their role included work in a wide range of areas.

The Chair thanked the District Inspector for the verbal report. On behalf of Councillor Feeley who was unable to attend the meeting, the Chair asked would the structuring improve the continuity of the officers out in the community. The District Inspector confirmed there was always succession planning for future changes. With the current national operational uplift to increase the number of police officers, an impact had been noted on the police community schemes. A number of community officers had joined the police organisation to pursue a police career. He stressed the importance of recruiting individuals to replace those that move on. Thanks were given to the long standing community officers who acted as a support for new officers joining.

Members heard North Wales Police had a policy in place with unauthorised encampments. It was stressed procedures had to be followed in the correct timely manner. The police were reliant on the joint working with partners such as Denbighshire County Council to assist with supporting the individuals on the site. It was stressed the importance of having a designated area for travellers to accommodate them when moving through North Wales to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments. Members appreciated the complexity of the issues and the sensitivity around the subject.

Agencies worked successfully together to address neighbourhood crime. There were always areas that could be improved but on the whole agencies worked well in the community. Dysfunctional families were sometimes difficult to manage as they require a wide range of support from a number of different teams. Communication with agencies and families was vital to ascertain an outcome for families. Numerous meetings took place between teams in the police to work in partnership to support families in the community.

The Public Space Protection Order in Rhyl High Street, was due for renewal. The police were working in partnership with Denbighshire County Council Officers to

collate the evidence to re-establish the order in Rhyl. That evidence would be sent to the authority as soon as possible. The reason it had ceased had been due to a misunderstanding on the timing around resubmitting evidence to have it renewed. The order had been in place in Rhyl for 6 years, alongside the order the police researched what further actions could be implemented to protect the area. Officers stressed they were working as hard as possible to reinstate the order as quickly and swiftly as possible. Members were pleased to hear the application was in hand.

The Chair asked if on behalf of the Committee, thanks could be passed on to those involved in issuing the North Wales County Alerts. They were very beneficial and very informative for Members.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Inspector Kevin Smith of North Wales Police's Local Policing Services Division for attending the meeting to share information on the neighbourhood policing model in Denbighshire, and for his willingness to answer members' questions about the various services and initiatives provided across Denbighshire. In response to a request from the Chair, Inspector Smith agreed to pass on members' appreciation to North Wales Police staff involved with the provision of Community Alert bulletins to local elected members. It was:

Resolved: to acknowledge the information imparted and to thank Inspector Smith for his contributions under both agenda items 5 and 6 on the meeting's business agenda.

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated) seeking Members' review of the Committee's work programme which provided and update on relevant issues.

The next Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting was scheduled for the 14 December. There was one item listed for the next meeting:

- Setting of Affordable Rent Levels – Members were informed the item had been deferred due to a delay in receiving guidance from Welsh Government.

The Scrutiny Chair's and Vice Chair's Group next meeting was scheduled to be held on 28 November 2023 and Members were encouraged to complete the relevant form attached (appendix 2) if there were any items Members wanted to be considered at the meeting. No items had been added to the Committee's work programme at the previous Scrutiny Chair's and Vice Chair's Group meeting.

Appendix 3 was the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme for Members reference. Appendix 4 provided the Committee with further information regarding recommendations from the previous meeting.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator highlighted following the resignation of Councillor Peter Scott, the Committee was required to nominate a replacement on two Service

Challenge groups and the representative on the Capital Scrutiny Group. The Chair Councillor Joan Butterfield agreed to attend the Capital Scrutiny Group on behalf of the Committee. The two Service Challenge Groups that required a representative were:

- Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services
- Corporate Support Service: People

Members heard the Service Challenge Group meetings were held virtually, once a year. She encouraged Members who had an interest in a particular area put their names forward as representatives. Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones agreed to represent the Committee on the Corporate Support Service: People and Councillor Brian Jones was nominated to attend the Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services Service Challenge Group.

Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones enquired on the outcome of her proposal for a report on tree maintenance. She enquired if a decision on the subject had been reached. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator confirmed the proposal had been discussed and a report had been included on the Communities Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for its meeting in May 2024. The Committee:

Resolved: to –

(i) confirm its forward work programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and

(ii) appoint the following representatives to serve on the Groups detailed below –

- ***Capital Scrutiny Group – Councillor Joan Butterfield***
- ***Planning, Public Protection & Countryside Services – Councillor Brian Jones***
- ***Corporate Support Services: People – Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones***

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair informed the Committee that she had recently attend the Housing and Communities Service Challenge Group meeting and would be reporting on its proceedings to the Committee at its next meeting in December.

Councillor Bobby Feeley had recently attended a meeting of the Bwthyn y Ddôl, Sub-Regional Children's Residential Assessment Unit Project Board. In her absence Councillor Feeley had provided the Scrutiny Coordinator with the main points stemming from the meeting. These included:

- that building work had started on the site and was progressing well, with an expected completion date of late August 2024
- until the new building was available a temporary residential centre, recently approved by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), had opened with a full complement of staff
- staff were also undertaking outreach work with families referred to the Service; and
- some vacant health posts were currently undergoing a recruitment process.

Meeting concluded at 12.25pm