

## **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, 13 February 2025 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Joan Butterfield (Chair), Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Kelly Clewett, Pauline Edwards (Vice-Chair), Bobby Feeley, Jon Harland, Brian Jones and David Williams

### **ALSO PRESENT**

The Corporate Director: Social Services & Education (NS), The Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services (EJ), Traffic and Transportation Manager (MJ); Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RhE), Senior Committee Administrator (Host) (KJ) Committee Administrator (RhTJ)

Councillor Elen Heaton (Lead Member for Health and Social Care)

Councillor Ann Davies

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB): Integrated Health Community Director for Conwy & Denbighshire - Gareth Evans

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Terry Mendies, Arwel Roberts and Elfed Williams, along with Councillor Barry Mellor – Lead Member for Environment and Transport, for business item 6.

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Kelly Clewett declared a personal interest in business item 5, as an employee of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB).

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

No items of an urgent nature had been drawn to the attention of the Chair, or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, prior to the commencement of the meeting.

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

The minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 December 2024 were submitted. The Committee:

***Resolved: that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 19 December 2024 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.***

No matters were raised in connection with the contents of the minutes.

## **5 ROYAL ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL (RAH) DEVELOPMENT**

The Lead Member for Health and Social Care and the Corporate Director: Social Services & Education (CDSSE) presented the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) Development report (previously circulated) alongside Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) Integrated Health Community Director for Conwy & Denbighshire, Gareth Evans. The report shared progress and plans for the development of the RAH site in Rhyl.

It was emphasised that whilst the RAH project was led by the Health Board the Council was working very closely with Health Service colleagues on the project, with the Lead Member and Corporate Director dedicating some considerable time and effort into realising the development. The proposal was to deliver new services alongside relocated and expanded supporting services from a new clinical building. The project would also aim to refurbish the existing RAH building as a support centre with some clinical, patient-facing services remaining in situ, e.g., Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Physiotherapy.

The BCUHB Integrated Health Community Director guided the Committee through a presentation highlighting the background and summary of the work undertaken to date on the RAH project, including its scope, key dates, programme governance structure, and collaborative working opportunities.

BCUHB aspired to develop the site, which had a long history. Whilst a business case had been submitted in 2021 but, due to inflationary costs caused by factors outside of the control of the Health Board, such as the pandemic and geo-political matters, insufficient capital was available to fund the scale of work outlined in that business case. Consequently, an Option Appraisal for a lower-cost development was agreed upon with the Welsh Government in July 2024. It was then agreed to progress the scope through innovative procurement of design, detailed in an Addendum to the 2021 full business case (FBC), which was submitted to WG.

Due to financial constraints, the scope of the work had to be re-evaluated. This entailed a design which prioritised the delivery of new services in a new, smaller clinical building. The project also required the Health Board to prioritise the refurbishment of the existing Grade II Listed RAH building as a support centre. In addition, with a view to alleviating pressures at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd (YGC) and support the local population, the Health Board was expected to provide the following services in the new building:

- A new Minor Injuries and Ailments unit
- Some “Care Closer to Home” beds
- Increased opportunities for collaborative working with partners at the site

Under the revised plans the new clinical building would accommodate the following:

- A new Minor Injuries and Minor Ailments Unit (MIAU) taking demand away from Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and serving people closer to home

- approximately 14 community beds (number subject to design constraints), which would enable Health and Social care to meet the needs of local people
- A relocated and expanded Radiology service and an expanded Community dental service.

The existing building would be refurbished to include:

- repairs to the floor structure and external fabric
- refurbishment of current unoccupied areas
- new electrical and heating infrastructure
- co-location of the Third Sector adjacent to the Community Team; and
- the potential repatriation and expansion of sexual health, audiology, and orthotics services (subject to design and funding limits).

The Committee were advised of the indicative key dates for the project's development and delivery –

- **Jan – April 2025:** Procurement (this phase was currently in progress)
- **March - August 2025** – submission of planning application for the site
- **May 2025:** Approval by BCUHBoard of new build design, then submission to Welsh Government (WG)
- **July 2025:** Approval by BCUHBoard for existing building, then submission to WG
- **August 2025:** design and cost update for the existing building (RIBA 3)
- **Quarter 1 2026:** commencement of the new build phase
- **Quarter 2 2026:** commencement of the work on existing building construction

The Committee were also informed of the ongoing stakeholder engagement taking place.

- Continual “Bite Sized Health” engagement events
- Rhyl White Rose Centre events in 2025
- Developing the work on the wider economic benefits to the community with stakeholders in local government and the Voluntary Sector
- Continuation of staff engagement events
- Return to the Equalities Stakeholder Group
- A Clinical Reference Group had recently been established.

Following the introduction, in response to members' questions, the Lead Member, Council, and BCUHB officers:

- confirmed that the new designs were being finalised, once they were finished, planning permission would be sought.
- Advised that there had been good, positive dialogue with Welsh Government (WG) and the other local stakeholders on the project and its funding. The North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB) had endorsed the partnership element of the funding and included it within their 10-year Capital Investment Plan. Health Board officials and relevant Denbighshire County

Council (DCC) officers had been involved in discussions with WG ministers at the highest level with respect of the project.

- The proposed 14 beds were intended to prevent people from needing to attend the acute hospital. They were very much viewed as a step up/step down provision which would be a key feature of future health and social care provision, complementing other aspects of the prevention work e.g. Community Resource Team (CRT) and other community-based services.
- clarified that approximately 20% of funding within the project would come from regional partners, via the NWRPB. The remainder would be sourced from WG via capital funding streams.
- Advised that whilst car parking facilities were yet to be finalised, all partners were confident that satisfactory solutions would be included in the final plans.
- Confirmed that the wards closed in 2012 were closed on fire safety grounds which would be too costly to upgrade to meet modern-day standards.

A number of committee members expressed the view that there was a need to reinstate community hospitals as the needs within the community were continuously increasing and causing severe pressures on acute hospitals, such as YGC.

The committee emphasised that the length of time the process to redevelop the hospital was taking was frustrating, especially for local members who had been elected members since the inception of the proposal for the RAH development. The Lead Member for Health and Social Care advised that she understood members' frustrations on the matter. However, the project had been re-scoped to accommodate budget constraints, more capital funding had recently been promised by UK Government to the WG for health projects therefore there was every reason to feel more optimistic about this particular project and be forward thinking for the future.

BCUHB Integrated Health Community Director responded to members' concerns that the matter may fall foul of political processes ahead of the 2026 Senedd election, stating that the project had been ongoing through multiple electoral cycles. The WG had shown its commitment to the project by setting aside funding for it, subject to the conclusion of the scoping and design planning stages. It was earmarked as one of its major capital investment projects. The project, once completed, would reap huge benefits for the local community.

The Chair thanked BCUHB's Integrated Health Community Director for Conwy and Denbighshire for attending the meeting and giving the presentation, and in conjunction with the Lead Member for Health & Social Care and the Corporate Director of Social Services & Education, for answering members' questions.

After an in-depth discussion, the Committee:

**Resolved:** -

- (i) to note the scope of the work, the timescale, and potential available funding for the purpose of developing the Royal Alexandra Hospital;***

- (ii) that the feedback and observations provided during the discussion be considered as part of the service provision planning for the development; and**
- (iii) that a further progress report on the Royal Alexandra Hospital Development be presented to the Committee at its September 2025 meeting.**

## **6 DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

The Traffic and Transportation Manager, alongside the Principal Engineer—Road Safety & Active Travel, and Operational Transport Manager, presented the Draft Regional Transport Plan (previously circulated).

The report detailed the ongoing development of the North Wales Regional Transport Plan, which would replace the existing *North Wales Joint Local Transport Plan 2015*. Officers acknowledged committee members' concerns regarding the report's size and its complexity, stressing that it was a high-level plan which would sit between the national transport plan and local area transport plans.

Across Wales, each of the four Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) was required to produce both a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) for their respective region. This report outlined the development of the *North Wales Regional Transport Plan*, which the North Wales CJC was developing in collaboration with the six North Wales local authorities. The RTP had been drawn up by the CJC's Transport Sub-Committee, on which Denbighshire County Council's representative was the Lead Member for Environment and Transport. The North Wales Regional Transport Plan would eventually replace the previous North Wales Joint Local Transport Plan 2015. Nevertheless, the latter Plan would remain "live" until the North Wales RTP has been approved by the Welsh Government, which was expected to be during the Summer of 2025.

The purpose of the four Regional Transport Plans was to help deliver the ambitions contained within the Wales Transport Strategy "Llwybr Newydd". The National Transport Delivery Plan (NTDP) would support the delivery of the Wales Transport Strategy. The Welsh Government has developed the NTDP, and this would deliver trunk road projects, rail projects, and transport policies, projects, and initiatives of national significance.

The committee was informed that the consultation on the draft RTP was ongoing and would be conducted largely online. However, hard copies of the consultation would be available across the region at libraries and one-stop shops.

Following the introduction, the committee discussed the following further –

- Whilst welcoming the plan, questions were raised about parking, especially kerbside parking, as the Welsh Government's proposal to ban this practice. Officers explained that this was a complex matter, compounded by the fact that young people remained living at home for longer leading to households having numerous cars. There was no funding available at present to develop residents' car parks. The WG had proposed to proceed and ban footway parking once the 20mph speed limit had been fully implemented, it had even included it in the NTP but not stipulated its inclusion in RTPs, however no

firm proposals had yet been put forward for its enforcement. This matter could be discussed through the CJs if members requested it to be escalated to that level.

- The challenges experienced with respect of active travel, especially in the county's rural areas.
- Housing developments and the need to ensure sufficient parking facilities were available. Members felt that this problem should be highlighted within the Authority's consultation response. Officers confirmed that it was difficult at times to find an appropriate balance between enough parking provision in new developments whilst also encouraging active travel.
- Parking in certain urban and AONB destination areas proved to be extremely problematic during peak holiday season. Members were firmly of the view that workable solutions required to be devised.
- Members suggested that due to the sheer size of the transport plan and its complexities that it would be beneficial for the projects outlined in Appendix B to be taken to their respective Member Area Group (MAG) meetings to allow a localised discussion on the proposal. Officers agreed to the suggestion put forward by the committee and assured members that these projects would be taken to the relevant MAGs once they were sufficiently developed.

Members raised concerns about the CJs work and whether local elected members would be losing out on an opportunity to discuss matters that affected their communities. The Scrutiny Coordinator clarified that work was ongoing to establish a joint scrutiny committee for the CJs. However, local authorities' own scrutiny committees would still retain the powers to examine any matter that affected their local areas, the work of the joint scrutiny committee would be focussed on examining the strategic objectives and plans of the CJC not local area matters.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee:

**Resolved: to confirm that -**

- (i) as part of its consideration it had read, understood, and taken account of the Integrated Well-being Appraisal (Appendix A); and***
- (ii) having considered the contents of the report and the draft Regional Transport Plan (RTP), requested that the observations made during the discussion be incorporated into Denbighshire County Council's final response to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) on its draft RTP.***

## **7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report and appendices (previously circulated), which sought the Committee to review its future work programme.

Members were informed that there would be an informal joint meeting of the Committee with Conwy County Borough Council's Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on March 18th to discuss the Joint Conwy & Denbighshire

Youth Justice Service. The Service's inspection report had previously been discussed at Denbighshire's Governance and Audit Committee who had suggested that the monitoring of its Action Plan be undertaken by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee. As this was a joint service for Conwy and Denbighshire it had been decided to convene a joint meeting for this purpose. The original inspection report had been circulated to Committee members as part of the Information Brief document earlier in the week and members were encouraged to read it prior to the joint meeting.

The next meeting in April would include two items: a progress update in relation to an Audit Wales' report on 'Urgent & Emergency Care: Flow Out of Hospital' and a report reviewing the management of the Household Waste Recycling Centres, members were informed that this item was not linked with the new waste model.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator also added that from the previous Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group (SCVCG) meeting, two items had been referred to the Committee. One of which had been discussed at the current meeting, the draft Regional Transport Plan. The other related to the elimination of profit from the care of children looked after. The SCVCG had considered an information report on this topic and were satisfied that the Council had a firm grasp on ways to deal with the proposed changes at present. Nevertheless, as WG Guidance was currently under development they felt that it would be advisable for Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to examine the matter in detail at the meeting at the beginning of 2026.

Members were advised that the next SCVCG meeting was scheduled to be held on 10 March 2025. Their attention was drawn to Appendix 2, which contained the Members' Scrutiny Proposal form. This form required completion and return if members had any topics, they wished to be considered for inclusion on a future scrutiny committee forward work programme. The Committee:

***Resolved: subject to the inclusion of a progress report on the Royal Alexandra Hospital development for submission to the Committee at its September 2025 meeting, to confirm its programme of future work as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.***

## **8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

Councillor Feeley, Scrutiny's representative on Bwthyn y Ddôl, the Sub-Regional Children's Assessment Centre's, Project Board had been unable to stay for the duration of the meeting. In her absence the Corporate Director: Social Services and Education provided the Committee with an update on the Project. Bwthyn y Ddôl was now open. The 4-bed (short stay therapeutic) provision had received Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) approval and was now registered for service provision. Some additional work had been required with respect of the 2-bed emergency provision in order for it to meet the criteria for CIW approval for registration. That work had now been completed and it was anticipated that CIW would approve its registration imminently. Consequently, as the delivery of the project was nearing completion the Project Board have stood down.

Meeting concluded at 12.15pm