

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Chair)
Councillor Robert Llewelyn Jones (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Glyn Haynes, T LI Hughes MBE, Vaughan Hughes, Alun Roberts, Dafydd Roberts and Margaret M Roberts.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnership, Community & Service Improvements) (for item 3),
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) (for item 4),
Head of Democratic Services,
Scrutiny Officer (GR),
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Kenneth P Hughes, Nicola Roberts.
- Leader of the Council – Councillor Llinos M Huws.
- Mr Keith Roberts – The Roman Catholic Church,
Mrs Anest Fraser – The Church in Wales.
- Councillors Eric W Jones, Dylan Rees (invited in respect of Item 3 as representatives of the Council on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority).
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Robin Williams – Portfolio Holder – Finance.
- Councillor Richards Griffiths (Invited in respect of Item 3 as representative of the Council on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority).
- Community Safety Manager Gwynedd & Anglesey (GJ) (for item 3),
Manager – North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Services (NC) (for item 4),
Emergency Planning Officer (GH) (for item 4).

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Mr Gwyn Jones, Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) – North Wales Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting.

Mr Gwyn Jones gave a presentation to the Committee on the functions of the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service as regards to fire safety, firefighting, attending road traffic accidents and emergencies (water rescue/flooding) in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. He said that ten years ago statistics showed that North Wales had the highest proportion to population of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings in England and Wales which was considered unacceptable. The Chief Fire Officer's Task Group was established to examine the Service's strategy and policies for preventing accidental death from fires within homes together with reviewing performance management process and profiling of victims and incidents. He noted that to date, one person has died this year due to accidental fire within the home. Mr Jones said that contributory factors to accidental death from fires were being alone; age (over half were 60+); having a disability, rented accommodation, fire interaction (smoking, cooking left unattended); alcohol and drugs and having no working smoke alarm. He said that profile of the Fire & Rescue Service was reviewed with joint working undertaken with services within local authorities, police and other local agencies to share information and identify vulnerable persons to avoid possible accidental fires.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) for his presentation. The Committee considered the information presented and made the following points:-

- Clarification was sought as to whether the Fire Service is continuing to be able to erect fire alarms, without charge, within residential dwellings. The Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) responded that a grant is received by Welsh Government which enables the Fire Service to purchase the equipment but it is the Fire Service who funds the erection of the fire alarms in dwellings. He further said that Fire Officers are able to give advice to residents when visits are undertaken as regards to fire safety and the prevention of fires within the home environment. He noted that working in partnership and sharing information with local authorities and other statutory agencies, the Fire Service is able to target the most vulnerable persons within the local communities to prevent possible fires within the home;
- Questions raised as to whether the Fire Service continues to attend local events and Agricultural Shows to promote the service offered to residents as regards to fire prevention. The Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) responded that the Fire Service attends such events but strives to share facilities with other emergency services to enable budgetary savings;
- Concerns were raised that local highways have been closed due incidents of flooding/accidents/bridge closures recently and the effect it has on congestion of vehicles and the potential delay for the emergency services. Members of the

Committee expressed that local communities are not informed of road closures and considered that Town/Communities Councils should be informed of any local road closures/incidents. The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnership, Community & Service Improvements) responded that the Highways Authority together with the UK Highways deals with such procedures with regards to road closure issues. She noted that she would discuss the matter raised with the Highways Department of this Authority;

- Reference was made to issues with gorse fires with the majority of incidents are deliberate and use valuable emergency services resources. The Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) responded that the Fire Service has an Arson Reduction Team who work closely with the Police Authority and whose main aim is to help tackle the problem of deliberate fire setting so that people, communities, businesses, the environment and the area's heritage are not put at risk. Preventing deliberate fire is paramount by working closely with local authorities and communities to intervene early when anti-social behaviour begins. He noted that the Fire & Rescue Authority has an educational vehicle to raise awareness of arson related issues and prevention of fires;
- Clarification was sought as to whether there is recruitment issues within the Fire & Rescue Service. The Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) responded that the challenge in the recruitment of persons as part-time firefighters is that a person needs to be within five minutes of the station and are suitable to undertake such requirements of a firefighter.
- Questions were raised as to whether collaboration exists between the Fire Service and the RAF Valley Firefighter Service. The Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) responded that the Fire Service use the facilities at RAF Valley as regard to LGV testing and firefighting training is afforded to the RAF Valley firefighting personnel aswell; a few of the RAF Valley firefighting personnel are also part-time firefighters with the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service.

Councillor Richard Griffith, invited in respect of Item 3 as representative of the Council on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority) said that during previous consultation on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service budget a suggestion was made that one of the two fire engines in Wrexham be taken out of service but due to strong public opinion within the Wrexham area the reduction in the fire engines in Wrexham did not materialise. He expressed that continued increase in the precept on local authorities is of a concern and residents are having to face increases within their Council Tax bills.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Manager (Gwynedd & Anglesey) for attending the meeting.

It was RESOLVED to request the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority to attend to meeting on an yearly basis.

ACTION : As noted above.

4 REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING SERVICE - NORTH WALES COUNCILS

The Chair welcomed Mr Neil Culff, Regional Manager, North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service and Mr Gwyn Hughes, Emergency Planning Officer to the meeting.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the purpose of the report is to provide an update regarding both regional priorities and Council work programme.

Mr Neil Culff, Regional Manager, gave a presentation on the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS) setting out legislative requirements, the structure of the regional services and governance arrangements. He said that local authorities have duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996. The Council meets its obligations by collaborating with the other North Wales local authorities through the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service, for which Flintshire County Council is the lead authority. He noted that the NWC-REPS reports to an Executive Board, comprising an Officer representative of each of the North Wales local authorities that are partners to the service. This service has been in place since 2014 and the NWC-REPS provides a primary link between the Council and North Wales Local Resilience Forum with the contributions from service staff being fundamental in multi-agency groups, events, processes and plans. Within the Council, responsibilities for emergency planning and response are shared across services and nominated service representatives.

The Regional Manager reported on work streams undertaken by the Emergency Planning Service :-

- **Pandemic Flu** – work is undertaken across the region together with Health Service and local authorities Social Services Department as regards to preparedness arrangements for pandemic flu which is classed as ‘very high’ on the National and Community Risk Registers;
- **Kerslake Report** – the report was produced following a review of the Manchester Arena attached in May 2017 and the NWC-REPS have compiled a Gap Analysis on the recommendations that have implications for all Councils. The NWC-REPS Learning & Development programme will include training for elected members on dealing with major incidents;
- **Community Resilience Strategy** – implementing a 2017-2020 Community Resilience Strategy when dealing with local emergencies and seeking greater local resilience. Details will be reported to the Town and Community Council Forum in due course;
- **Data sharing** – working closely with emergency services and local authorities to identify vulnerable persons if incidents occur i.e. flooding situations when evacuation is needed;
- **Learning and Development** – a designated Officer leads on training and exercising within the Emergency Service Team. The role is to work closely with local authorities to identify persons who have a role within emergency response and identify training needs.

The Head of Democratic Services said that through establishing a regional arrangement for emergency planning it has been possible to increase resilience and specialist support for local authorities across North Wales. He noted that emergency services, as a service function was part of Council Business and an internal group of Officers from each department meet on a quarterly basis to address Emergency Planning matters and information reported to the Senior Leadership Group/Penaethiaid. The Head of Democratic Services also referred to aspects of the current work programme including business continuity plans, and that arrangements were being planned with Flintshire County Council in April 2019 to conduct a joint exercise to test plans and share good practices. Other aspects of the work undertaken were referred to namely:-

- **Threat Escalation Planning** – local authority’s preparedness for responding to National Security requirements and dealing with follow up actions;
- **Exercise MônCefni** – an exercise held in September 2017 with the aim of giving Council staff an opportunity to practice setting up and running a rest centre and to test elements of the Council’s ‘Rest Centre Guidance’ document. The Regional Service is currently preparing guidance for local authorities to encourage volunteers to assist at rest centres;
- **Holyhead Marina damage (March 2018)** – support was given by NWC-REPS to establish a task group in Holyhead to co-ordinate actions on a multi-agency basis;
- **Wylfa Site** – the Council is required to prepare an Off-Site Emergency Plan. An ‘exercise’ was undertaken in 2016 to test arrangements and it is anticipated that another ‘exercise’ will need to be arranged in September 2019. The NWC-REPS will be providing input to the Wylfa Newydd Construction Sub-Group which has been established to co-ordinate emergency planning issues during construction phase of the Wylfa Newydd project.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the Emergency Planning Service for his presentation. The Committee considered the information presented and made the following points:-

- Reference was made that this authority’s financial contribution has seen an annual reduction of 2% towards the NWC-REPS since its establishment in 2014. Questions raised as to what impact this has had on the service in general. The Regional Manager noted that staffing structures had been revised to reduce costs and that certain costs e.g. associated with preparation of some key plans could be reclaimed.
- Clarification was sought as to whether the Emergency Planning Service has prepared for the possibility for a no Brexit deal and traffic congestions in the port of Holyhead. The Head of Democratic Services responded that contingency arrangements were in place to deal with traffic management issues affecting the bridges and impact on the Port. The Manager of the NWREPS noted that the implications for Ports was being considered on a national level.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee receives a future report as part of its Work Programme for 2019/20.

ACTION : As noted above.

5 WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Officer on the Committee’s Work Programme to June 2019.

It was RESOLVED to note the Work Programme to June 2019.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm

**COUNCILLOR
CHAIR**