

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 11 March 2021

- PRESENT:** Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Chair)
Councillor Glyn Haynes (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors T LI Hughes MBE, K P Hughes, R LI Jones,
Alun Roberts and Dafydd Roberts.
- Leader of the Council - Councillor Llinos M Huws (items 4,5 and 7),
Councillor Richard A Dew – Portfolio Holder for Planning and
Public Protection (item 6).
- Councillor Dafydd R Thomas
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive (item 6),
Director of Social Services (item 7),
Head of Housing Services (item 6),
Head of Democratic Services,
Policy and Strategy Manager (CWO) (item
5),
Policy Officer (RWJ) (item 5),
Scrutiny Manager (AD),
Scrutiny Officer (SR),
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor Margaret M Roberts
- ALSO PRESENT:** Programme Manager, Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services
Board (item 4)
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The Chair expressed his condolences to the Director of Social Services, Mr Fôn Roberts on his recent bereavement.

The Chair wish to congratulate Mr Fôn Roberts on his recent appointment as Director of Social Services.

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February, 2021 were confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon

The Chair said that a letter was sent on behalf of the Committee to Welsh Government expressing the Committee's disappointment and concerns that there were no plans in place as regards to GCSE's and A Level examinations for the Summer of 2022. The Chair noted that a response has been received by the Minister for Education, Ms Kirsty Williams AS which states that a letter will be received before 6 April, 2021 to address the concerns expressed by this Committee.

4 PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD - SCRUTINY OF PROGRESS AND DELIVERY OF THE WELL-BEING PLAN

Submitted – a report by the Programme Manager, Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board in relation to the above.

The Leader of the Council said that the report highlights the progress and delivery of the Well-being Plan by the Public Services Board. She noted that the pandemic has slowed the progress of the Sub-Groups which support the implementation of the work of the Board, but now all the Sub-Groups are revisiting their work plans. The Public Services Board has continued to meet during the pandemic period which demonstrates the commitment of the Board to the work.

The Programme Manager, Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board gave an update on the progress of the Sub-Groups. She noted that of each of the Sub-Group are led by a member of the Board. A workshop was undertaken in September 2020 to discuss the Board's role in the recovery of the pandemic. It was agreed that the role of the Board is to keep an overview of the work that is currently undertaken by the organisations. At the last meeting of the Board the Sub-Groups were challenged to report on their work undertaken as regards to their work plans and achievements; each Leader of the Sub-Groups will give an update report to the next full meeting of the Board. The Programme Manager reported on the each Sub-Group as follows:-

- **Homes Sub-Group** – the sub-group has a part-time project manager who ensures that the project operates to an expected timetable and resources. The purpose of the sub-group is to look for opportunities to develop innovative housing, which complement and not duplicate the work arising from the Anglesey housing strategy. One site at Maes Mona, Amlwch has been identified for development in the near future.

- **Climate Change Sub-Group** – the sub-group over the last few months has focused on revising their work plan since the delay due to the onset of the pandemic. A workshop was undertaken in January, 2021 to attract a wider representation of public organisations. The sub-group has identified that they need to consider how to engage with communities, to focus on long term objectives and to identify the role of each organisation when faced with flooding issues.
- **Health and Care Integrated Sub-Group** – this sub-group is an example of good practise that has added value towards current plans with professional officers being able to share experiences and joint working. The Sub-Group continues to address specific aspects such as children, adults, mental health, learning disabilities and transformation. The need to work together, share information and ensure easy access to services was recognised as a common purpose for all work streams.
- **Welsh Language Sub-Group** – Mr Aled Jones Griffith of Coleg Llandrillo a Menai has now agreed to take the role of leading the sub-group which will be approved by the Board at the meeting in March. The Sub-Group is to consider its work plan for the coming months. The Sub-Group was to view the use of the Welsh language as members of the public make initial contact with public organisations and it intended to conduct a study to consider the language us in reception areas with the hope of increasing the use of the Welsh language.

The Programme Manager referred to the Well-being Assessments and it is intended to engage and consult with Anglesey residents from the 6 well-being areas. It is intended to work closely with the Council and other partners in order to engage effectively and try to avoid duplication. In addition the Public Services Board will publish its Annual Report by June 2021.

The Committee considered the report and made the following main points:-

- Questions were raised as to how the Public Services Board assures that the work undertaken does not duplicate the work already afforded by the local authorities. The Programme Manager responded that as regards to the established Sub-Groups there is a representative from the local authorities on each of the sub-groups and this gives an opportunity to highlight any duplication of work streams the sub-group intends to undertake and to make sure it adds value to the intended projects. The Chief Executive gave an example of the work streams as regards to identifying land for development of innovative housing which has materialised from the work of the sub-groups;
- Questions were raised as to the future of the Public Services Board due to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill being passed by the Senedd on 18 November, 2020 and the established Corporate Joint Committees across Wales. It was considered that it will be a challenge for local authorities to manage to attend and work within different established organisations in the future. The Leader of the Council responded that the establishment of Public Services Board was to address the statutory obligations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It is also important to assure a strong representation on a local footprint for the Public Services Board within the regional landscape;

- Questions were raised as to the role of the Board during the recovery period following the pandemic. The Programme Manager responded that the Sub-Groups have revisited their work plans. The Board also held a workshop in September 2020 to discuss the role of the Public Services Board in the recovery work. It is expected that individual organisations will report to the Board to ensure that work is undertaken to restore local communities following the pandemic. The Chair ascertained whether further questionnaires were to be distributed as regards to the well-being assessments; reporting that communities of Anglesey had already been asked to participate in a range of questionnaires. He noted that the response to the questionnaires and engagement sessions during the last round of the well-being assessment had been disappointing. The Programme Manager responded that the approach as to gather evidence as regards to the well-being assessment this time round had not been decided until it is clear as to the requirements and expectations. This will be discussed further at the next Public Services Board meeting;
- Questions were raised as to the work undertaken by the Climate Change Sub-Group and whether discussion are undertaken as regards to Global Warming. The Programme Manager responded that the Climate Change Sub-Group focuses on organisations working together to address flooding issues. The Sub-Group is reviewing its work programme to enable improvements to organisations working within the local communities. Members raised that this Committee should receive regular updates on the work undertaken as regards to the Authority's efforts to reduce carbon footprint. The Chief Executive said that work is undertaken on issues regionally as part of the National Strategy to reduce carbon footprint. The Authority is focusing on a strategy plan to reduce climate change and reducing carbon footprint within the services of the Council and regular update reports will be available. She noted that the Public Services Boards has agreed to focus on flooding issues and the role of community engagement when communities are faced with flooding in their areas.

It was RESOLVED to note the progress of the work of the Public Services Board.

ACTION : As noted above.

5 EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Submitted – the Equalities Annual Report 2019/20 for consideration by the Committee.

The Leader of the Council said that Welsh Government introduced specific duties to help public bodies in Wales to meet the Equality Act 2010 general duty. These specific duties include a requirement to develop and publish equality objectives and Strategic Equality Plans. She referred to the data within the report and it was encouraging as to the young people that the Authority has employed and the way the Council has also been able to sustain a wide range of age groups as employees of the Council.

The Policy and Strategy Manager gave an overview of the report and as to how the Authority meet it Equalities responsibilities and specific equality duties. She noted that the Equalities Annual Report is statutory documentation to meet the general duty of the Equalities Act. The report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March, 2020 where it relates to employment data. The remainder of the report includes an outline of developments up to December 2020 so as to provide a more up-to-date focus as well as to complement the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. The Policy and Strategy

Manager said that whilst it has been a challenging year for the Authority dealing with the pandemic there are encouraging examples and a number of activities carried out by the Council and its partners to promote equality and protect the most vulnerable communities as can be seen at Page 16 of the report. The Authority has also adapted to challenges of the pandemic with staff working from home and meetings been convened virtually. Staff have needed to adapt to the challenges of home schooling and child care responsibilities.

The Committee considered the report and made the following main points:-

- Questions were raised as to what extent the Council successfully achieved the equality objectives. The Policy and Strategy Manager responded that it is considered that the objectives of the Equalities Plan has been addressed by the Council;
- Reference was made to priority 8.2 within the Annual Report – An effective corporate process is established to ensure the ongoing assessment of impact across services. Questions were raised as to whom assesses the corporate process. The Policy and Strategy Manager responded that assessing for impact on equality is an ongoing process which should be incorporated into the development of proposals.
- Reference was made as regards to the educational gaps between girls and boys and children receiving schools meals and especially during the pandemic. Questions were raised as to what the Authority's priorities to address this gap in the future. The Leader of the Council responded that it will be a challenge to identify and evidence the gap especially whilst children have had to receive their education at home and to measure the effect it has had on pupils. She noted that when pupils return to the schools they will need to be assessed to gauge the potential and achievement of pupils and to balance their well-being;
- Reference was made that 8 priorities have been identified within the report and the purpose of the Equalities Act is to focus on equality and fairness. Questions were raised as to why only 8 priorities have been identified when it is evident that there are many other priorities that needs to be addressed and people may be treated unfairly. The Leader of the Council responded that there has been discussions as regards to these priorities when the Equalities Strategic Plan was submitted to this Committee. The document was also discussed at the full Council thereafter when it was explained the ability of the services of the Authority to achieve identified priorities. She further noted that if the Committee considers that a specific area needs to be prioritised within the Plan then the matter can be addressed.

It was RESOLVED to accept the Annual Equality Report 2019/20.

ACTON : As noted above.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE

Submitted – a report by the Deputy Chief Executive in relation to the above.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Public Protection said that the climate crisis is relevant corporately within every services of the Council with a target of being carbon neutral by 2030. There will be expectations of residents, communities and businesses for the Council to take specific action to respond timely and effectively will increase. He noted that to respond effectively to the climate crisis there will be a need for leadership,

policies and the change of practices together with financial and technical solutions and there will be a need to start to adapt to the ways of working by the Authority.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the County Council declared a climate emergency at the full Council held on 8th September 2020 and committing the Authority to become carbon neutral by 2030. There are several National and Regional Strategies that have since been drafted to respond to the challenges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Whilst the authority is fully committed to continue engagement and collaboration with all partners, at all levels, there is also a recognition that all delivery is local. The authority is committed to providing local leadership on the Island, and to act corporately to deliver decisive changes to enable the effective transition into being a carbon neutral organisation. Whilst some decisions and actions are within the authority's control, others will need assistance and additional resources from the Welsh Government and UK Government to co-ordinate, develop and deliver. Together with UK Climate Change Act (2008), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environmental Act (Wales) 2016 provide the legal framework for action on climate change and sustainable management of Wales' natural resources, with each underpinned by strategies and frameworks. Local Government is recognised as being fundamental to delivering decarbonisation, particularly in providing local leadership and championing ambitious sustainable solutions and behavioural change.

The Deputy Chief Executive further reported that the Local Government Decarbonisation Strategy Panel has been set up to help lead, support, encourage and give a strategic overview. The establishment of the Panel was agreed by the Partnership Council for Wales in June 2020, with representation by local authority Chief Executives, WLGA, other public sector organisations, Welsh Government and relevant advisors. It reports to the Partnership Council who provides political direction and leadership for the work. North Wales local authorities are represented by the Chief Executive of Conwy County Borough Council. Each local authority is committed to :-

- Understanding their carbon footprint, in line with guidance for public sector greenhouse emissions reporting;
- Agreeing to set of net zero commitments/pledges for COP26 (scheduled to be held in Glasgow in November 2021);
- Closely monitoring and reporting on their current and future carbon emissions;
- Ensuring there is a robust, evidence-based net zero action plan in place, as a living document by March 2021;
- Working with the new Decarbonisation Strategy Panel

It was further reported that the authority does not currently have a dedicated corporate (or political lead) for climate change. Whilst some expertise exists on decarbonisation within specific services, this is aligned with construction and building improvements. Other authorities have demonstrated their commitment to this critical thematic area by allocating dedicated resources. It is hoped that over time Welsh Government will recognise that activity to tackle climate change and decarbonisation must be reflected and incorporated into local authorities' annual settlements. There is no alternative but to allocate core funding to create dedicated capacity/expertise to lead on progressing and co-ordinating the initial stages of development and delivery. This would be utilised to cover the employment costs of a Senior Corporate Climate Change Programme Manager for a two year period, with an operational budget that would be utilised to prepare a carbon baseline, monitoring framework, dashboard, formulate accosted

action plan, and procure training. The dedicated capacity would also co-ordinate cross service activities, represent the authority in relevant regional and national groups and events, report on progress, influence service activities, identify good practice, and ensure there is a sense of purpose, leadership and momentum.

The Committee welcomed that a Senior Corporate Climate Change Programme Manager was to be appointed as it will enable the Authority to move forward the programme of climate change within the Council. Reference was made that the Authority should be promoting the work that has currently been undertaken in addressing climate change and carbon footprint as part of contracts for building social housing, street lighting having been change to solar and low carbon facilities.

The Committee considered the report and made the following main points:-

- Reference was made to the school meals contract and the need for the contractors to be sourcing produce locally as part of school meal contract. The Deputy Chief Executive responded the school meals contract is coming to an end and the procurement process is currently been undertaken in respect of the school meals contract;
- Reference was made that heating of home uses a lot of energy. Questions were raised as to how the Council is to address future requirements of reducing costs of heating homes . The Head of Housing Services responded that 4 dwellings have been built in Holyhead which are classed as passive housing which are insulated structures. He further said that a further 6 dwellings have been built in Caergeiliog which are a modern sources of construction and to improve the heating capacity of such dwellings is important to residents due to energy costs. There will be a challenge to improve the current housing stock to comply with the requirements but a grant of £500k was afforded by Welsh Government to heat homes with solar panels and air source facilities.

It was RESOLVED to support and endorse:-

- **the development and implementation of a new corporate Climate Change Programme to enable the authority to transition into a carbon neutral organisation by 2030;**
- **the recruitment of a corporate Climate Change Programme Manager to lead on development and delivery;**
- **the establishment of a Climate Change Working Group (with political representation) an advisory, non-decision making group to make recommendations and requests.**

ACTION : As noted above.

7 NORTH WALES SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Submitted – a report by the Director of Social Services in relation to the above.

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Social Services said that the report meets the statutory requirements that the North Wales Safeguarding Board publishes its Annual Report. The reports provides an overview of the work of both the North Wales Children and the North Wales Adult Safeguarding Boards from April 2019 to

March 2020 and the progress made in delivering key objectives across the region to safeguard people. The report outlines the next steps and longer term plans for the Regional Safeguarding Board. She noted that examples of good practice that has been achieved has been highlighted within the report.

The Director of Social Services reported that safeguarding requires effective partnership working and the Annual Report 2019/20 acknowledges good practice across the region, as well as areas of development. These areas for development are reflected in the North Wales Safeguarding Board business plan for 2020/21. The Boards continues to mature in the last year to one where they demonstrate effective co-operation and challenge are part of everyday business. The Boards can demonstrate how they have influenced the national agenda on the National Procedures and the All Wales Practice Guides. He noted that a Wales Safeguarding Procedures has been implemented and numerous training sessions have been held virtually for staff within children and adult services.

The Director of Social Services further said that there were concerns during the first months of the pandemic that referrals within children services had decreased and the Safeguarding Board was able to raise awareness to the Welsh Government as to the shortcoming within the system.

The Committee considered the report and made the following points:-

- Councillor R LI Jones as the Older People's Champion expressed that there are concerns as to the abuse of elderly people and he questioned as to how the Safeguarding Board was safeguarding the elderly. The Director of Social Services responded that efforts were made locally to raise awareness of all age groups and people were encourage to report concerns as to any person they had concerns over within their communities. He noted that training is given to all staff who are involved with the care of the elderly;
- Reference was made to children who are educated at home and the lack of educational inspection by educational bodies. Questions were raised as to how the Safeguarding Board deals with issues relating to children educated at home/home schooling. The Chair expressed that the Children's Commissioner has raised the issue recently. The Director of Social Services responded that discussions are currently been undertaken as regards to new guidelines for the education of children at home. He noted that the Social Services and Educations Departments work closely to share any concerns as to these children that receive home schooling. However, he noted that this is a complex matter and some children flourish with home schooling but it is important to note that safeguarding of children is also a matter that needs to be monitored;
- Questions were raised as to the work the Board undertaken in relation to developing and supporting compliance with Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019. The Director of Social Services responded that courses have been available on-line and virtually. He noted that the guidelines as regards to the Safeguarding Procedures are available through a mobile App which is easy to read and available to the public.

It was RESOLVED to note the information contained within the North Wales Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2019/20.

ACTION : As noted above.

8 SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIPS

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Officer in relation to the above.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that the report gives an overview of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee between June 2019 and November 2020. She noted that the task of scrutinising partnerships needs to continue to be done in a managed way, focusing on the key strategic partnerships which enable the Council to deliver on its objectives and priorities. In order to add value, arrangements for scrutiny of partnerships need to continue to be timely and proportionate. The County Council has extensive experience in working in partnership, locally, regionally and on national level. The Scrutiny Officer further referred that as a result of the current pandemic, the Council has to prioritise its resources and the efforts of its workforce in maintaining business as usual is not possible. The Coronavirus Act 2020 and the subsequent Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 reduce the legal obligations on local authorities in relation to meetings, whilst permitting remote attendance by members for any required meetings. Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, the requirement to scrutinise some annual reports was put aside, or the schedule was extended in order to undertake the work.

Both Scrutiny Committees met for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic during September 2020, and since then, the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee has met regularly and resumed the scrutiny work on partnerships and has complied fully with all statutory requirements. However, some partners that were scheduled have been postponed as a result of the pandemic, and the Committee's work programme has had to be prioritised to complement local requirements and consider the pressure these partners were also facing; these partners were outlined within the report. Reference was also made to Appendix 2 attached to the report which outlined the partnerships that needs to be prioritised and invited to attend this Scrutiny Committee in due course. The Scrutiny Officer further said that it is an intention to invite those partnership who have been unable to attend the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee due to the pandemic to discuss the partnership working with the Authority on the Island to correspond with the recovery phase.

The Committee considered that an invitation needs to be afforded to following organisations to attend the Scrutiny Committee in due course:-

Natural Resources Wales
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Ambulance Services

It was RESOLVED to note and support:-

- **Scrutiny of key partnerships undertaken during 2019/20;**
- **The partnerships it is intended to prioritise in the Committee's work programme over the next year;**
- **Proposed next steps as detailed in paragraph 5.11 of the report;**
- **To invite the partnerships where there has been slippage in the work programme as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic to discuss their partnership work to coincide with the recovery period.**

ACTION : As noted above.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Officer.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21;**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the Forward Work Programme.**

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM O JONES
CHAIR**