

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 13 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Non Dafydd, Euryrn Morris, Pip O'Neill, Derek Owen, Margaret Murley Roberts, Ken Taylor.

Portfolio Members :

Councillor Alun Roberts – Portfolio Member for Adults' Services;
Councillor Dafydd Roberts – Portfolio Member for Education & Welsh Language;
Councillor Nicola Roberts – Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection & Climate Change.

Co-opted Members :

Mrs Gillian Thompson (Parent Governor – Primary Schools Sector);
Mr John Tierney (The Roman Catholic Church)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Director of Social Services,
Head of Regulation & Economic Development (for item 5 only),
Head of Democracy,
Policy & Welsh Language Manager (FO) (for item 6 only),
Levelling Up Programme Manager (EM) (for item 5 only),
Corporate Programme Manager (ATR) (for item 3 only),
Project Manager (AWJ) (for item 3 only),
Scrutiny Manager (AD),
Scrutiny Officer (EA),
Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jeff M Evans, John Ifan Jones and Sonia Williams.

Councillor Llinos Medi – Leader of the Council;
Councillor Neville Evans – Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism & Maritime;
Councillor Gary Pritchard – Deputy Leader & Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services;
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas – Portfolio Member for Highways, Property & Waste;
Councillor Robin Williams – Deputy Leader & Portfolio Member for Finance.

Deputy Chief Executive.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Glyn Haynes

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February, 2024 were confirmed as correct.

3 TACKLING POVERTY STRATEGY PLAN - 2024-2029

The report of the Director of Social Services incorporating the Tackling Poverty Strategic Plan 2024-2029 was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The Portfolio Member for Adult's Services, in the absence of the Leader said that the Tackling Poverty Strategic Plan is a key plan and has been recognised as a priority and is also driven by the 2023-2028 Council Plan. The Plan provides clear direction and sets out a vision and key priority areas in tackling poverty over the next five years, and the steps the Council intends to take with external partners to ensure delivery of the Council's services to remain sustainable and effective in tackling poverty. In developing this Strategic Plan, consideration has been given to the Council's current financial position, which is an ever-reducing core and grant funding position, combined with increasing demand for services. The Council has engaged with internal officers at all levels, and various stakeholders in preparing the Plan.

The Director of Social Services reported that the Plan gives a clear direction as to how the Council can assist the residents of Anglesey to try and reduce the poverty that they are encountering and to direct them to other outside bodies that offer support. An engagement session with partner organisations was arranged with representatives from the third sector, Older People's Forum, Children and Young People's Forum and representatives from all the services of the Council to ensure delivery of services remain sustainable. He further said that to facilitate the plan a newly launched cost of living dashboard has been established to provide a strong, integrated, evidence-based data to enable the Council to make correct, informed decisions in tackling poverty on Anglesey and to gauge as to how much food is distributed from the Food Banks and as to how many people are engaging with services in respect of the needs.

In considering the Tackling Poverty Strategic Plan the Committee raised the following issues:–

- Clarification was sought as to how the decision was made by the Council to adopt the definition of poverty as '*poverty means not having enough resources and opportunities to meet basic needs, including needs associated with being part of society*'. The Director of Social Services responded that the Bevan

- Foundations definition of poverty was adopted.. He noted that there is no single definition of poverty as poverty can be associated to lack of experiences in various ways by different people that affects all aspects of their lives. Its exact nature can depend on individual circumstances from not having enough money to pay for basic essential such as food, clothing, housing, heating, to a lack of awareness of the support that is available.
- Questions were raised as to whom was consulted in preparing the Strategic Plan and whether it is considered that some stakeholders have not participated. The Programme Manager responded that the process in preparing the Plan was undertaken in November, 2023 with third party partnerships and other stakeholders to gauge initial priorities to tackle poverty. The Director of Social Services highlighted that the Plan is a 5-year strategy, and amendments can be incorporated within the Plan, as and when required, as it is uncertain as to the challenges associated with poverty and circumstances that may arise in the coming years. The Chief Executive said that organisations have been part in preparing the strategy who have experience in advising and supporting individuals that are facing poverty. He further said that due to demand and the lack of resources it is a difficult task to tackle poverty.
 - Reference was made that the draft Plan contains six priorities and questions were raised that in view of the current economic climate, to what degree is this too ambitious. Further questions were raised as to how the outcome of priorities are to be monitored and governed and as to how the data is to be collected to enable the Council to identify poverty in areas on Anglesey. The Director of Social Services responded that it is accepted that the priorities within the Plan are ambitious, however, realistic boundaries were set out with the stakeholders as to how the Council can assist in tackling poverty due to the current financial climate and uncertainties as to grant funding towards tackling poverty projects. He said that a Strategic Group will measure the success of the Tackling Poverty Strategic Plan on a quarterly basis and the cost-of-living dashboard will afford information as to the requirements of the residents of the Island who are facing poverty. The Chief Executive said that the data dashboard can assist to gauge the trends across Anglesey, but it was highlighted that there is limited staff capacity to be able to update the dashboards.
 - Questions were raised as to how residents are made aware of the assistance available to them if they are having difficulties in paying for essential needs and especially the elderly who may be too proud in asking for help. The Director of Social Services responded that a handbook has been published and distributed to local libraries, schools and close partners informing them how to access services available to help people in poverty. He noted that some people are not aware and are not claiming benefits they are entitled to received. He further said that some people find it difficult to accept that they need to access benefits available and tackling stigma attached to asking for help to access support can be challenging.
 - Reference was made to the gaps in attainment of school children due to poverty. Questions were raised as to whether there is scope to look beyond Trauma Informed Schools with Head Teachers and the Consortia and whether the research by universities and other related bodies can support to reduce the attainment gap. The Chief Executive responded that the demands on

school staff is already considerable with the changes to the curriculum, the RAAC issues in 2 Secondary Schools with having to teach children at home, and the financial crisis faced within society. He said that it is recognised that there is a need for investment in young people to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives but due to the lack of resource within local government it is becoming increasingly challenging. In response questions raised as to the research work undertaken by universities and other related bodies to reduce the attainment gap, the Chief Executive asked that examples of research details be forwarded to the Director of Education, Skills and Young People and the Director of Social Services for consideration.

- Reference was made to financial poverty and employment for young people. Questions were raised as to whether companies on the Island are being contacted as to whether they can afford apprenticeships to young people so that they can stay on the Island. It was noted that Welsh Government has cut the grants towards apprenticeships schemes. The Chief Executive agreed that the level of opportunities for apprenticeships scheme is concerning and due to the financial crisis Coleg Menai/Llandrillo are having to refuse to take young people on certain courses. He noted that some companies have been reliant on apprenticeships over the years but since the apprenticeships funding is reducing, the number of opportunities is also likely to reduce. He referred to the possible funding opportunities from the Shared Prosperity Fund, if additional resources are afforded as part of this Fund. He noted that this Authority contributes towards the apprenticeship levy and that funding is redistributed through Welsh Government. The Committee considered that a joint letter on behalf of this Council and Coleg Menai/Llandrillo be sent to the UK Government and to the new First Minister expressing that more financial resources should be afforded towards apprenticeship schemes.

It was RESOLVED to recommend that the draft Tackling Poverty Strategic Plan 2024-2029 be approved by the Executive and full Council.

ACTION : That a joint letter on behalf of this Authority and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, be sent to the UK Government and the new First Minister expressing concerns as to the effect on the decision to substantially reduce the financial resources towards apprenticeship schemes in the UK.

4 STRATEGIC CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

The report of the Director of Social Services incorporating the Strategic Corporate Safeguarding Update was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The Portfolio Member for Adult's Services said that prevention and safeguarding is listed as one of the Council's key general principles within the Corporate Plan 2023-2028. He emphasised that safeguarding is a priority for everyone in every service within the Council.

The Director of Social Services reported that the focus has been on safeguarding action plan and ensuring that services remain focused with mandatory training for all Council staff. A successful Safeguarding week was held in November 2023 with

details contained within the report. He noted that a notable increase in domestic abuse cases on Anglesey was discussed at the Safeguarding Board to which an action was to escalate matters to the Director of Social Services, Head of Housing Services and the Deputy Chief Executive at the Anglesey and Gwynedd Community Safety Partnership Board. It was noted that this is not a unique situation for Ynys Môn as other local authorities are noticing a rise in domestic abuse cases. A new Safeguarding Strategic Plan will be developed over the coming months together with a forward work programme and the Terms of Reference for both the Strategic and Operational Groups will also be reviewed.

In considering the Strategic Corporate Safeguarding Update the Committee raised the following issues:–

- Clarity was ascertained as to what measures are in place to ensure full compliance with corporate safeguarding training requirements and how it is monitored and especially in schools. It was also expressed that attendance of Elected Members training data should also be included within the report. The Director of Social Services responded that the data shows that attendance on the mandatory safeguarding are lower than expected in some services. He noted that some services have recently experienced a turn-over of staff and some staff who do not have access to laptops to receive such training. He said that arrangement will be made to invite these individuals to the Council Offices to receive the mandatory safeguarding training in due course. Discussions are undertaken with the Heads of schools to ensure that the mandatory safeguarding training course is completed by all staff.
- Reference was made, within the report, that a notable increase in domestic abuse cases on Anglesey. Questions were raised as to what extent is the Authority currently fully equipped to deal with the situation and the role of North Wales Police as regards to the increase in domestic abuse cases. The Director of Social Services responded that whilst there is an increase in domestic abuse cases there is no additional resources to address the situation. He noted that discussions are taking place with Gorwel who provide a range of support services which include people affected by domestic abuse and homelessness. Discussions are also undertaken across services of the Council and especially the Housing Services and Social Services Department to share data of incidents of domestic abuse. Staff within the Children's and Families Service support children who are living in homes which have experienced domestic abuse situations. The Director of Social Services further said that due to the increase in domestic abuse there may be a situation that a 'waiting list' for support will need to be established which is not a situation that this Authority wishes to undertake. Further questions were raised as to whether specific trends have contributed to increase in domestic abuse i.e. poverty, drugs, alcohol. The Director of Social Services said that it is a complex issue with several factors that relate to domestic abuse. He noted that additional information as regards to the different factors relating to domestic abuse can be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.
- Questions were raised as to what assurances can be given that arrangements are in place to fully meet Objective 2 of the Corporate Safeguarding Action Plan which discusses a workforce equipped to discharge their safeguarding duties effectively at a level adequate with their role and responsibilities. The Director

of Social Services responded that the data of staff who have attended mandatory training courses is important and safeguarding events are also afforded to staff to ensure compliance with the safeguarding requirements within their role and responsibilities.

- Reference was made that there are reports of slippage against several key workstreams. Questions were raised as to the reasons for the slippage and what arrangements are in hand to mitigate the impacts. The Director of Social Services responded that arrangements have been undertaken to ensure that basis safeguarding awareness training and the data shown within the report has improved. The Chief Executive said that the recruitment of staff who have the competencies, knowledge, and the understanding to undertake role which incorporate safeguarding are part of their role is important.
- Questions were raised as to data available with regards to modern slavery. The Chief Executive responded that the Gwynedd and Anglesey Partnership Board receives data from North Wales Police on a quarterly basis as regards to modern slavery. He noted that the Deputy Chief Executive is the lead officer from this Authority on the Board.

It was RESOLVED to note the developments over the past 12 months that offers reassurance that the Council are meeting their safeguarding obligations.

ACTION: That the Democratic Services Committee should ensure that corporate safeguarding training should be part of the Elected Member Training Programme.

5 LEVELLING UP PROGRAMME - HOLYHEAD - MEASURE PROGRESS

The report of the Head of Regulation and Economic Development incorporating the Levelling Up Programme for Holyhead was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The Portfolio Member for Adult's Service, in the absence of the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Member for Economic Development said that the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) is a capital only fund which is designed to invest in core, social-economic infrastructure that improves people's lives across the UK. The £4.8 billion fund, launched in March 2021 and has a focus on 3 key areas to support centre and high street regeneration: local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. The County Council determined that a bid centred on the 'heritage; culture and townscape' attributes of Holyhead rather than the Island's wider regeneration needs would likely be more appealing to the UK Government. The volume and complexity of work that went into developing the bid was immense which resulted in significant, intensive collaborative working by the County Council with partners from Holyhead.

The Head of Regulation and Economic Development reported that the timeframe for completion of the projects by the end of March 2025 in Holyhead will be challenging, however, the Council is intending to request an extension to the timeframe which is similar to other LUF projects in the region. Inflation has influenced the programme with escalating costs, and he stressed that it is important

to be realistic as to what is achievable within the timeframe and funding available. He further said that important and prominent projects in Holyhead have started, and this report focuses on the Ucheldre Centre project. He further said that aims and details of each project in Holyhead can be seen on-line which gives the local community information on the programme. The Levelling Up Team are located in Holyhead and are available for the community to engage with them and to afford information as required.

In considering the report the Committee raised the following issues:–

- Questions were raised as to what extent is the budget sufficient to deliver the entire programme to the timetable set. The Levelling Up Programme Manager responded that the projects are required to follow the Councils procurement process and some tenders have needed to be readvertised which has extended the timeframe. Following the procurement process it is evident that the funding available is insufficient to carry out all the project identified in Holyhead and work is currently being undertaken with the partner organisations to consider the timeframe and costs of each individual projects. Further questions were raised as to whether this has resulted in some of the projects not been completed and whether the Board will decide which projects will only receive a proportion of the funding. The Chief Executive responded that the number of projects within the programme will need to be adapted which could have implications as work is undertaken with external organisations. The costs, due to inflation, are higher than estimated within the projects and it is a sensitive issue at present. The scope of the projects can be adapted but there is no point in starting a project if the funding is unavailable to fully complete. A number of partner organisations have numerous projects within the programme, and they will need to consider which projects are prioritised for delivery with the available funding.
- Questions were raised as to what extent is the ability of key partners to deliver a risk to the success of the whole programme. The Levelling Up Programme Manager responded that risks have been identified at the outset of the programme as regards to the partner organisation able to deliver their projects. The Levelling Up Team meets with the partner organisation monthly to gauge the progress of each project and a quarterly review is undertaken to gather an overview of the funding and timeframe of the projects.
- Questions were raised as to how many local employees are employed by contractors within the projects and when it is anticipated that the benefits of the projects will be achieved. The Levelling Up Programme Manager responded that as part of the programme partner organisations are requested to keep a register of their employees and whether they are local to the area. He noted that one of the partner organisations has afforded two apprenticeship opportunities with Anglesey Builders. The benefits of the projects will be measured as to the completion of the building in Holyhead that have been renovated and the number of employment opportunities afforded to local people.
- Questions were raised as what communication arrangements are in place to promote the programme and how can they be strengthened. The Head of Regulation and Economic Development responded that it is important that a high level of communication is afforded to the local community. The details of the projects in Holyhead are afforded on-line which gives an overview of who is leading on the projects. He noted that two communicating events have been

arranged which gives constant engagement with the community of Holyhead and another event is scheduled to take place in April.

It was RESOLVED :-

- **To note the progress in the development and delivery of the LUF programme in Holyhead;**
- **To note the implementation of the LUF Programme in line with UK Government guidance;**
- **To recognise the role of the Council in supporting the Programme's Delivery Partners.**

ACTION : As noted above.

6 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT - 2022/2023

The report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer incorporating the Annual Equality Report – 2022/2023 was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The Portfolio Member for Adult's Services, in the absence of the Leader of the Council said that under the Equality Act 2010 Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011, the Council must publish an annual report on equality. The main purpose of the report is to show how the Council has met its equality duties and the report must be published by 31 March in the year following the reporting period.

The Policy and Welsh Language Manager reported that the Annual Equality Report 2022/2023 is the last report in its current form and new arrangements will be established to coincide with the new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028.

In considering the report the Committee raised the following issues:–

- Questions were raised as to what extent did the Council fully deliver on its equality objectives and priorities for 2020-2024. The Policy and Welsh Language Manager responded that the Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024 included 20 indicators of what should be expected to be seen when actions are completed. She noted that 19 of the indicators were completed and one indicator, which is a cause of concern, as regards to the gathering of information on equality characteristics amongst employees of the Council. She further said that there is a need to strengthen equality within the workforce and additionally across the Island with most equality priorities transferring to the new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028. The Policy and Welsh Language Manager referred that the current Equality Plan was approved in 2020 and several factors, such as the cost-of-living crisis, has arisen to affect the ability to achieve some of the objectives within the plan.
- Questions were raised as to the risk to the Council that data gaps persist in the equality information regarding the Council's employees. The Policy and Welsh Language Manager responded that gathering information as regards to the Council's workforce is challenging as it is dependent on staff sharing information voluntarily. Gathering information from new employees is an easier task as there

is an expectation when they fill application forms and also during the induction process that they share equality information. She said that as part of the risk factors, there is a need to gather as much information as possible from the employees to ensure that the Council is a fair employer and can offer equal opportunities to the staff. She further said that it is important to convey to the employees is that no inappropriate use of the information will be shared. However, if the information from employees is not shared, the Council could be prejudicial unknowingly. Quality data is essential to ensure equality within the workforce and that the Council is an inclusive and appealing employer.

- Reference was made to the hybrid working policy and questions were raised as to the effect on staff with criticism and inappropriate/negative comments that has been seen on social media that staff are working from home. The Chief Executive responded that the staff of the Council work hard for the benefit of the residents of Anglesey and social media has escalated over the last few years with inappropriate comments as regards to several issues. As a Chief Executive he considered that the Council has benefited from hybrid working arrangement with a work life balance for the benefit of the Council. Staff are required to work core hours and support is afforded to staff as regards to welfare. The Head of Democracy said that training and counselling are afforded to staff of the Council.
- Reference was made that the Annual Report notes that robust governance and accountability arrangements will be established for 2024-2028. Questions were raised as to how these arrangements affect the Council's future annual equality reports. The Head of Democracy responded that a new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 has recently been approved and arrangement will be made to review the style and format of the Annual Equality Report. An Internal Group will be convened to lead on the work of the new Strategic Equality Plan with a task as to whether additional information can also be incorporated into the Report. Additional work will be undertaken with the Communications Teams of the Council to ensure consistencies with other publications as several other strategic plans are currently being published by the Council.
- Reference was made to Appendix 3 of the Annual Report which states that it is confident that the gender pay gap does not stem from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work. Questions were raised as how assurances can be given that this is the case to safeguard the Council from significant financial consequences as experienced in some local authorities such as Birmingham City Council. The Chief Executive responded that equal pay claims took a toll on financial resources of Birmingham City Council. A job evaluation process was undertaken within this Council several years ago when each post was evaluated, reviewed, and scored by an Independent Panel. He noted that historical single equal pay claims may arise but robust HR policies and pay scales are reviewed on a regular basis with the Trade Unions.
- Questions were raised as to the response of staff to Welsh language course offered by the Council. The Policy and Welsh Language Manager responded that discussions as regard to staff training needs are undertaken during the Annual Development Conversation with their Line Managers. Welsh language skills are also evaluated during the Annual Development Conversation with an opportunity to identify development opportunities. Data is thereafter gathered by the HR Team and a programme of training is offered to staff. She further said that there is a good representation from all services of the Council on the Welsh language courses. She further said that there is additional expectation on staff

within Social Services, as part of the 'Mwy na Geiriau' national framework set by Welsh Government, that people should be able to receive care in their chosen language which can have an impact on the most vulnerable people when Welsh is their first language. Details on the analysis of the training needs as regards to the Welsh language within the workforce will be included in the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report published in June.

It was RESOLVED to accept the Annual Equality Report 2022/2023.

ACTION : As noted above.

7 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 2023/2024

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme 2023/2024 was presented for consideration.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2023/2024;**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

The meeting concluded at 4.10 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**