

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 8 March, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)

Councillors John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Bryan Owen, Alun Roberts,
John Arwel Roberts, Nicola Roberts

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services), Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects & Economic Development), R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Youth, Libraries & Culture) Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities) R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS (Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Council Business), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Education, Skills & Young People
Interim Director of Social Services
Head of Highways, Waste & Property
Head of Housing Services
Head of Democratic Services
Interim Head of Adults' Services
Interim Head of Service (Regulation and Economic)
Head of Profession (HR) & Transformation
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM)
Principal Valuation Officer (TDE)
Economic Development Manager (THJ)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Richard Owain Jones, Mr Keith Roberts, Mr Dyfed Wyn Jones (Co-opted Members)

ALSO PRESENT: Accountancy Services Manager (BHO), Scrutiny Officer (SR), Mr Gareth Williams (Local Democracy Reporter)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this virtual meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

With reference to item 4 on the agenda, Councillor Nicola Roberts declared that she had served as a director of the Llangefni Partnership, the social enterprise that had for a period been responsible for managing and running the Llangefni Golf course. She clarified that the Partnership's involvement with the golf course predated her becoming a director.

2 SOCIAL SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Interim Director of Social Services and Interim Head of Adults' Services providing a summary of progress and improvements to date within the Social Services was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor Llinos Medi, Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services provided a summary of the key developments since the Committee was last updated in September, 2010 as follows –

- That Social Services are currently working within budget and both Adults and Children and Families' Services are on target to close the financial year in this position.
- In September, 2020 as part of the national Welsh Government initiative to roll out an ID card for young carers throughout Wales, the Service began working in partnership with Gwynedd Council and Action for Children to develop an ID card for young carers. This work has since progressed as detailed within the report and the Service is currently working with regional partners to develop a unified approach to design for a North Wales Young Carers ID card in digital, card and wristband format. The ID card is to be formally launched next week.
- That two of the established Small Group Homes are running at full capacity, work is progressing on a third and an offer has been made on a fourth property using ICF funding to provide accommodation for children cared for by the Authority.
- The Service has secured ICF provision funding to purchase a detached bungalow in order to offer an improved day care service for children with complex needs. A property has been identified and its purchase is in process.
- A "no wrong door" approach is being developed in responding to the emotional well-being and mental health needs of children and young people which have been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic. This means that families, children and young people seeking help with mental health and emotional well-being needs will not be bounced between services or told that they are knocking on the wrong door. A plan has been formulated to further develop and take this approach forward.
- An independent audit of Adults' Social Services has been commissioned and will report on findings to the Social Services Improvement Panel.
- Three Community Resource teams in Amlwch, Ysbyty Penrhos Stanley and Llanfairpwll are now in place and due to Covid-19 restrictions, are meeting virtually.
- A position update is provided with regard to the two projects aimed at delivering the Adult Learning Disability Strategy – these encompass external day services and the in house provision. Due to Covid 19 the commissioning timetable for the externally commissioned provision has slipped.
- The development of the Shared Lives Programme has been severely impacted by the pandemic. The project which is ICF funded is to be continued but will be opened up to support older people,
- The expansion of the community hubs has been put on hold during the pandemic. Elements of the work are continuing virtually examples of which are given in the report.

The Interim Director of Social Services said that despite the daily challenges of Covid-19, and the third national lockdown which came into effect on 19 December, 2020 and the

unprecedented demands on staff, both Adults and Children and Families' Services have continued to fulfil their statutory duties and as the report testifies, have succeeded in progressing a range of developmental and innovative projects as well. The Service and the Council are proud of their staff.

The Interim Head of Adults' Services referred to the Learning Disability Day Services noting that despite the lockdown closure of learning disability day centres, digital contact with clients has been maintained throughout the period. Consequently in developing its recovery plan, the Service will be looking to build on the lessons learnt during the pandemic in terms of doing things differently recognising that technology can be a part of supporting people with learning disabilities. This is in tune with the feedback received from clients and is one of the positives to come out of the pandemic.

Councillor Richard Griffiths reporting on the work of the Social Services Improvement Panel confirmed that despite Covid-19 the Panel has continued to meet regularly over the past six months in virtual form and has meetings scheduled for the coming few months as well. The Panel has continued to receive evidence of development across both Adults and Children and Families' Services and in the three meetings held over the course of October, 2020 to January, 2021 the Panel has given attention to the two services' performance over Qtrs. 1 and 2 2020/21; care home arrangements during Covid-19; progress against the Older People's Services Improvement Plan; winter pressures in Adults' Services and safeguarding with specific reference to domestic violence. An independent audit of Adult Social Care Services has been commissioned and an Internal Audit review of the Corporate Parenting Panel has been conducted and concluded that there would be advantages in more closely aligning the Panel with the Social Services Improvement Panel.

Points made and questions raised by the Committee were responded to as follows –

- Members were encouraged by the financial performance of Adults' Services and Children and Families' Services to date this year but accepted that both services could face increased pressures going into the new financial year as lockdown restrictions are eased and demand grows. In light of this the Committee sought assurance about the services financial resilience and ability to cope going forwards and whether any good practices could be taken from the pandemic that could mitigate the concerns in this respect.

The Committee was advised that Welsh Government has announced the provision of a £206m support package to help councils meet the additional costs of dealing with the pandemic for the first six months of 2021/22 to be accessed via claims to the hardship fund. Whilst it is difficult to project the level of demand and therefore the likely costs going forward, the experience in Children and Families' Services has shown that as lockdown restrictions have eased, referrals to the service have increased and the significant year end underspend projected in Quarters 1 and 2 of the current financial year has consequently reduced going into Quarters 3 and 4. It is possible that in returning to some normality the budgets for Adults and Children and Families' Services may prove insufficient leading to overspend which is where having reserves is important.

With regard to good practice, the increased reliance on technology during the pandemic has brought specific benefits for example the number of looked after children attending assessment review meetings conducted virtually has increased because they are more comfortable with meeting in this way and are used to the technology. The Service aims to capitalise on these gains by extending the use of technology to for example the support provided for foster carers.

The challenge moving forwards will be to recognise the effects of the pandemic on adults and children and to ensure that the service is prepared accordingly going into the recovery period. Some of the innovative projects referred to in the report e.g. the No Wrong Door mental health project lay the groundwork for recovery and further mitigations have been put in place through the establishment and expansion of the community hubs.

- Reference was made to the Young Carers ID cards with the Committee seeking clarity on the advantages they are expected to bring.

The Committee was advised that the ID card is a national scheme funded by Welsh Government and developed as a partnership between the Carers Trust and local authorities to help establish young people's status as carers and make it easier for them to be supported accordingly. From the feedback received young carers said that they would prefer to have a digital ID and so with Welsh Government and the Carers Trust approval, Anglesey and Gwynedd are piloting this option as part of the roll-out of Young Carers ID cards throughout Wales and have developed an app for the purpose.

- Reference was made to the independent audit of Adults' Social Services and the reasons for its being commissioned.

The Committee was advised that the independent audit will perform the function of a critical friend and provide an in-depth analysis of systems, processes and procedures in Adults' Services to ensure they are fit for purpose and that the delivery of services is timely and responsive and not hampered by bureaucracy or duplication. The audit will provide the Council with a detailed overview of what is a complex service area and will provide clear and agreed recommendations with regard to specific areas that the Service needs to focus on to improve outcomes for the service user.

- With reference to the No Wrong Door scheme, the Committee noted that the stresses on mental health and social care for children are recognised and that a significant increase in need is anticipated over the coming months. Reference was also made to evidence of school children seeking access to GP services because of mental health issues. The Committee sought assurance that current provision is adequate to be able to respond to this new additional need and that further, the plan for progressing the No Wrong Door scheme is sufficient and enables the Service to move quickly to deal with the potential upsurge in demand.

The Committee was advised that in acknowledging the challenges of the coming months the Service will consolidate its current approach and practice with regard to the good working relationship it has with schools and with the Learning Service especially in terms of tailoring and shaping services to meet the need, expanding the services on offer and using grant monies differently to ensure that the response is timely. Prior to the pandemic, the Service had commissioned joint working with Parabl which provides support for individuals over 18 years of age in North Wales with mental health needs and, on the basis of the evidence of need that has emerged during the pandemic, the Service is now working with Parabl to lower the age threshold at which individuals can be seen so that the organisation can meet virtually with children and young people under 18 years of age who might not be eligible for CAHMS intervention but who nevertheless require support. The Service is seeing families access support who but for the pandemic would not necessarily have made the approach to Social Services.

It was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date in Social Services and,**
- **To recommend to the Executive that progress and pace of improvements in Social Services are adequate.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 3 2020/21

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 3 2020/21 was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Portfolio Member for Corporate Business introduced the report highlighting that during Quarter 3, Wales was put into a 2 week national firebreak on the 23 October, 2020 and also into a national lockdown (level 4) on the 19 December, 2020; these lockdowns have had, and continue to have an impact on Council services. However, it is encouraging to note that 88% of the Corporate Health Performance indicators monitored are continuing to perform well against target and are ragged Green or Yellow with a standout performance in staff absence management - 4.69 days lost to absence per FTE in the period against a target of 6.91 days lost to absence per FTE. All indicators under the digital service shift subheading have seen performances that have surpassed previous annual results during the pandemic. The importance of Social Media in communicating messages and positively influencing behaviours during the pandemic cannot be underestimated – the Council's social media channels have seen an increase of 8,500 followers from the end of Qtr.3 2019/20. There are currently 15 Performance Management indicators (33%) for which the collection of the data has either been cancelled by Welsh Government or are currently not being collected because of the redeployment of resources to deal with the pandemic – details of the areas affected are provided in section 4.2 of the report. For the remaining indicators reported in Q3 (27 indicators), 74% are performing above target or within 5% tolerance of their targets. Eight indicators are underperforming against their targets and are highlighted as Red or Amber on the scorecard; these are in relation to Public Protection, Children and Families' Services, Housing Service and the Planning Service. Explanatory information is provided in the report along with proposed mitigations. It should be noted however, that feedback from local planning agents indicates that Anglesey's Planning Service is the only one in the region that is currently continuing to provide a near to normal service as possible.

The Head of Profession (HR) AND Transformation referred to the key role of the Council's Communications Service during the pandemic and clarified that a number of factors have contributed to the improved performance with regard to staff absence management e.g. increased hygiene awareness and observance due to Covid-19 regulations resulting in the reduction of "bugs and viruses" as seen in the near eradication in 2020/21 of the flu. The Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager said that the report covers the most unstable period which saw two lockdowns and increased numbers affected by Covid 19. It is especially encouraging therefore to note that the Q3 trend in the majority of the areas ragged Red is one of improvement from Q2.

In discussing the report and acknowledging the contribution made by staff in maintaining performance in very challenging times, the Committee raised the following points to which the Officers and Portfolio Members responded with further information and clarifications –

- Assurance was sought with regard to the level of public risk going forward in relation to Indicator 10 – the percentage of high risk businesses that were subject to planned

inspections that were inspected to ensure compliance with Food Hygiene legislation (ragged Red with a performance of 13% against a target of 80% which is an improvement on the 10% undertaken in Q2). The Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development clarified that food inspections have been suspended by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) during the pandemic in recognition of the need to prioritise the response to Covid 19; consequently the Council's Public Protection capacity has been redirected to this priority. The programme of inspections is expected to resume and additional capacity has been put in place to support this work; the Service is confident that as Covid related pressures ease, further capacity will be released to focus on business as usual.

- Reference was made to the suspension of homelessness indicators from the Welsh Government and clarity was sought as to why the number of homeless and/or those at risk of becoming homeless cannot be measured. The Committee further asked for an overview of how the Housing Service is managing homelessness at this time. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that the Service continues to monitor homelessness cases on a weekly basis; it is aware of the number of people at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days as well as the number of individuals who through the Service's intervention, have been prevented from becoming homeless. The Service also keeps abreast of the number of people in emergency accommodation at any given time.

In acknowledging the response and taking assurance from the Service's commitment to managing homelessness the Committee thought it important that it be provided with some analysis of the homelessness situation locally to provide further clarity on how the Service is addressing what is an important issue and it asked for a report to that effect for the next meeting.

- Reference was made to the improving performance with regard to staff absence management which exceeded the target and which it was acknowledged could partly be accounted for by the different way of working which responding to the pandemic has necessitated as well as other factors as noted in the discussion. The Committee sought assurance that in moving to the new normal lessons would be taken from what has worked in responding to the pandemic and that there would not necessarily be a reversion to pre-Covid practices particularly with regard to post-Covid working arrangements. The Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation confirmed that the impact of Covid on working practices including considerations of the well-being and mental health of all staff to ensure a balance between office and home working will be one of the areas considered in planning for recovery and the new normal. Attendance at work levels are closely monitored and service managers are encouraged to hold regular conversations with staff to ensure that any issues can be quickly addressed. Any actions/measures that can contribute to improving attendance at work will be looked at carefully.

Having considered the report and the updates provided by Officers at the meeting, the Committee resolved to accept the report, to note the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future and to recommend the mitigation measures as outlined to the Executive.

ADDITIONAL ACTION PROPOSED: The Housing Service to provide data on managing homelessness to the Committee's next meeting

4 LLANGEFNI GOLF COURSE

The report of the Interim Head of Service (Regulation and Economic Development) on the options for the future of the Llangefni Golf Course following formal consultation was presented for the Committee's consideration. The consultation outcome report detailing the submissions received and the Council's response was appended.

Councillor Carwyn Jones, Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development provided background information to the Llangefni Golf Course highlighting that the facility was operating at a loss of around £28k per annum prior to its closure which the Council had to subsidise. The Executive in May 2018 endorsed in principle the intention to dispose of the Golf course and reinvest the proceeds in Plas Arthur Leisure Centre. The process has taken time and as with all other facets of society has been disrupted by Covid-29. Anglesey is well provided for in terms of golfing provision and the driving range facility in Llangefni which reopened in January 2019 under Golf Môn is proving very popular and successful and will remain open.

Councillor R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS, Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property referred to the transfer in February 2015 of the management and responsibility for the golf course to Llangefni Partnership, a social enterprise in the town which after a review of the facility's financial performance and an independent feasibility study, decided that it was unable to make the facility work financially in the long run whereupon the course was handed back to the Council and was subsequently mothballed.

The Interim Head of Service (Regulation and Economic Development) referred to the context confirming that following the Executive's previous decision in 2018 to endorse in principle the disposal of the Golf course, the Service has been considering options for its future. Participation figures have reduced and the running costs have become unsustainable. The Council is under a duty to consider the impact of a proposed disposal of playing fields on the health and wellbeing of a local community, to consult with the community and relevant consultees and to consider any representations made. Accordingly the Council undertook a formal consultation process between 12 October, 2020 and 30 November, 2020 and this was carried out in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decision) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

The Economic Development Manager confirmed that in order to prepare for the public consultation external solicitors were commissioned to provide guidance and assistance to ensure full compliance with the Playing Fields Regulations 2015. Between October 2019 and March, 2020, Officers completed all formal site and press notices, a comprehensive and detailed consultation report, all supporting reports and impact assessments and also ensured that all internal ICT platforms were fully compliant.

Councillors Nicola Roberts and Dylan Rees spoke as Local Members and acknowledged that it was a difficult situation for them locally in that no one wanted to see the loss of an asset, but accepted that dwindling participant numbers at Llangefni Golf Course in recent years had made the facility unviable. They also noted that the Llangefni Partnership which took over the running of the Golf course in 2015 was not able to make it work financially and surrendered the lease. Councillor Nicola Roberts sought assurances about the conduct of the consultation and in the event of the Golf course being sold, that the funds will be reinvested in local leisure facilities with any prospective sale of the facility being on the basis of best value even if that means splitting the sale into different lots. Councillor Dylan Rees in agreeing that insufficient demand made retaining the Golf Course unsustainable in the long term noted that it was deemed that there is sufficient golfing provision on Anglesey and that the driving range in Llangefni will in any case continue to operate; that Sports Wales as the only statutory consultee to respond to the consultation has no objection to the disposal of the facility and that in proposing to earmark the proceeds from the sale of the facility to improve the Plas Arthur Leisure Centre, for the

benefit of the locality, the Authority is paying regard to health and well-being of the community.

The Economic Development Manager reaffirmed that the consultation process had been open to all and to ensure that it was undertaken safely and successfully, all formal notices were updated to include the extra measures set out in point 2.8 of the report. The Council has exceeded the Regulation 5 requirements in terms of minimum timescales for the proposed disposal to be available for public inspection with a full page colour notice placed in local and regional newspapers for 7 consecutive weeks from 12 October to 26 November, 2020. Oversight was provided by external solicitors who confirm that the consultation was compliant with the regulations. Should approval be given to dispose of the facility then the proceeds would be ring-fenced for investment in the Plas Arthur Leisure Centre and consideration will be given to securing maximum value from the sale.

Councillor Peter Rogers spoke with the consent of the Chair as a member who had taken a longstanding interest in the Llangefni Golf Course; he voiced his concerns about the way in which it was proposed the Golf Course be disposed of fearing that the land will be marketed at a time when it is looking its worst. He emphasised that having borne a loss on the Golf Course over a number of years the Council must obtain maximum value from its sale and he urged that the best way to achieve this would be by holding off on an immediate sale and looking instead at the possibilities for incorporating the land within the Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) to maximise its value.

In considering the future of the Llangefni Golf course the Committee was agreed that disposing of the facility was the best way forward and given the financial situation and the need to obtain value for money, that that should be done at the best possible price. The discussion focused on whether the Council should proceed with the sale and begin to market the site comprising of the Ffridd household and accompanying 42 acres on the open market as recommended by Option 1 of the Officer's report, or whether the sale should be delayed to allow for consideration to be given to opportunities for incorporating the land within the JLDP at the next review which would enhance its value as development land.

Officers responded with the following advice -

- That as the land is currently outside the development boundary, selling the land for development is not an option. Notwithstanding the JLDP will be reviewed, changing the development boundary would require robust justification.
- That the Golf course land has not been let since the facility was closed. Whilst the Council has maintained the facility by way of grass cutting which has then been sold as income for the Leisure Service, no other works have been undertaken so as not to prejudice any subsequent consultation or decision under the 2015 Playing Fields regulations.
- That placing an overage clause on the sale of the land would entitle the Council as the seller to share in a possible future increase in the land's value. Should it be decided that the land be sold as agricultural land, an overage agreement would stipulate that if the land use changes within the timeframe of the agreement then the Council would profit from a percentage of the uplift in the land's value at the time the change occurs.
- That the Ffridd property has remained empty since it ceased to be used as the greenkeeper's house; it has been retained as it adds value to the site. The property is in a reasonable condition and apart from some maintenance work, does not require a great deal of expenditure. If a decision is made to proceed with the sale of the Golf Course then the land and the property would be lotted to maximise income.

Councillor Llinos Medi, Leader of the Council referred to the timescales and highlighted that it would likely take some time to approve the inclusion of the Golf course land within the JLDP even if that could be justified which means delaying investment in the Plas Arthur Leisure Centre. She added that the Executive is keen to include some form of caveat in the sale of the land to provide protection to the Council in terms of ensuring it benefits from any future profit on the land.

Councillor Bryan Owen proposed that the sale of the Golf course land be delayed to allow options for incorporating the land in part or in full within the JLDP when the Plan is reviewed, to be explored. Councillor J. Arwel Roberts in seconding the proposal, proposed that the Ffridd property could in the meantime be marketed on the open market and the proceeds of sale used for the benefit of Plas Arthur Leisure Centre. Councillor Bryan Owen agreed to the amendment.

Councillor Dylan Rees although he could understand the rationale for the proposal pointed out that an application for affordable housing in Tyn Coed, Llangefni was refused and was turned down at appeal as it was considered that there is sufficient affordable housing supply in Llangefni. He proposed that Option 1 in the Officer's report i. e. to proceed with the sale of the Golf course land and begin to market the site (Ffridd household and accompanying 42 acres) for sale on the open market be recommended to the Executive; the proposal was seconded by Councillor John Griffith.

The ensuing vote resulted in a tied vote. The proposal by Councillor Bryan Owen that consideration be given to incorporating the Llangefni Golf course land within the JLDP was carried on the casting vote of the Chair.

It was resolved to recommend to the Executive that the sale of the Llangefni Golf course land be delayed to allow consideration to be given to options for incorporating the land in part or in full within the Joint Local Development Plan when the Plan is reviewed, and that in the meantime the Ffridd property be marketed for sale on the open market and the proceeds of sale reinvested in the Plas Arthur Leisure Centre.

5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's forward work programme to April, 2021 was presented for consideration.

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.**

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**