

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 10 July 2024

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

Councillors Non Dafydd, Jeff M Evans, Euryn Morris, Pip O'Neill, Derek Owen, Margaret Murley Roberts, Ken Taylor and Sonia Williams

Portfolio Member

Councillor Carwyn Jones – Portfolio Member for Corporate & Customer Experience (for item 5)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive,
Director of Social Services,
Head of Adults' Services,
Scrutiny Manager,
Scrutiny Officer (EA),
Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES: Councillor John I Jones

Mrs Wenda Owen – The Church in Wales;
Mrs Gillian Thompson – Parent Governor – Primary Schools;
Mr John Tierney – The Roman Catholic Church

Portfolio Members

Councillor Neville Evans – Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime;

Head of Democracy;

Ms Dawn Docx – Chief Fire Officer, North Wales Fire & Rescue Service (for item 3).

ALSO PRESENT: Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Programme Manager (ST) (for Item 5 only).

Mr Stewart Forshaw, Mr Anthony Jones and Mr Eilian Roberts – North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (for item 3 only).

Mr Jason Killens and Ms Estelle Hitchon – Welsh Ambulance

Services (for item 4 only)

Portfolio Members

Councillor Gary Pritchard – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services;
Councillor Dafydd Roberts – Portfolio Member for Education and Welsh Language;
Councillor Dafydd R Thomas – Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste;
Councillor Robin Williams – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance;

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Jeff Evans declared a personal interest in respect of Item 3 – North Wales Fire & Rescue Service.

Councillor Euryrn Morris declared a personal interest in respect of Item 5 – Gwynedd & Anglesey Public Services Board – Annual Report 2023/2024 as he is employed by Gwynedd Council.

Councillor Dylan Rees declared a personal interest in respect of Item 3 – North Wales Fire & Rescue Service as he is the Chair of the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority. Councillor Rees expressed that he considered that whilst the declaration was a personal interest, it was appropriate for him to leave the meeting during discussion of the item.

3 NORTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

As the Chair had declared an interest and left the meeting the Vice-Chair took the Chair for this item only.

Councillor Margaret M Roberts was elected to serve as Vice-Chair for this item only.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair welcomed Mr Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr Anthony Jones, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation and Mr Eilian Roberts, Area Manager from the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service to the meeting.

A presentation was received by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer as regards to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service profile, Anglesey Fire Stations, Local

Authority Funding, Partnership Working, Business Fire Safety and Community Engagement.

The following were points of discussion by the Committee:-

- The Vice-Chair ascertained the potential challenges the Fire & Rescue Service would face if both bridges across the Menai Straits were to close, and an emergency was to occur on the Island. The Area Manager responded that occurrences of closure of the bridges have occurred due to high winds, and it is concerning that this will occur more frequently due to weather patterns due to climate change. He noted that as a Fire & Rescue Service it is important to put pressure for a third crossing across the Menai Straits. The Chief Executive appreciated the support of the Fire & Rescue Service for the Authority's campaign for a third bridge as the resilience of the bridges are concerning as the population of the Island increases immensely during the holiday season, and the Port of Holyhead, which is the busiest port in Wales. He noted that any data and examples the Fire & Rescue Service could afford will support and strengthen the campaign for a third bridge.
- Reference was made that the majority of Fire Stations on Anglesey are listed as as 'on-call' only with a low percentage rate of daytime availability. Questions were raised as to what extent does this pose a risk to residents and what plans are in place to improve availability across the Island to the future. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that daytime availability of Fire Officers can be a challenge but on average the response time to a fire occurrence on Anglesey is 13 minutes. The Holyhead Fire Station is available each day with support of a second appliance from the mainland. He noted that an Emergency Cover Review was undertaken by the Fire & Rescue Service recently and one of the options put forward to the Fire Authority was to turn the Llangefni Fire Station into daytime availability station, but it was rejected. However, work is currently being undertaken to consider where the 3 most suitable locations could be identified for full-time availability across North Wales. Further questions were raised as to the difficulties within recruitment of people within rural areas. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that recruiting from rural areas can be a challenge especially with daytime availability. The Emergency Cover Review considered affording full time Fire Stations within rural areas to give sustainability and job opportunities within the communities, and especially within Welsh speaking areas.
- Questions were raised as to whether the Fire & Rescue Service attend schools and colleges to promote career pathways within the Fire Service. Further questions were raised as to whether engagement with local businesses is undertaken to release staff who are considering a role within the Fire Service on a part-time basis. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that there is a continued recruitment process within the Fire & Rescue Service and there is also a commitment to attract women to be part of the service. He further said that it is a challenge for businesses to be able to release staff during the daytime due to financial constraints. The Fire & Rescue Service affords a successful Fire Cadet opportunity in Menai Bridge for young people between 12 and 16 to achieve Level 1 to 3 Award in the Fire & Rescue Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer referred to the Phoenix Project, where young people are released from school for a week to undertake worthwhile activities that will

assist in the integration and respect of the individuals within their communities and the roles and opportunities within the Fire Service.

- Questions were raised as to the career progression within the Fire & Rescue Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that the Fire & Rescue Service will be advertising for career opportunities within the next week. He noted that a career within the Fire & Rescue Service is worthwhile and career progression is encouraged within the Service. Further questions were raised that there seems to be a high level of retained and volunteering roles within the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that retained roles are mainly within the Fire Stations on Anglesey but with full-time Fire Fighters located within the Holyhead Fire Station.
- Questions were raised as to how North Wales Fire & Rescue Service are dealing with false alarms and what percentage of false alarms are chargeable. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that false alarms are mainly within business settings and are not chargeable.
- Reference was made during the presentation that partnership planning and delivery of exercises on the Wylfa site. Questions were raised as to which other areas is it intended to arrange exercises. The Area Manager responded that localised exercises are undertaken on a regular basis and large-scale exercises are undertaken in RAF Valley and on the Wylfa site with multiple other organisations. The Port of Holyhead is also within the localised exercise programme where regular exercises are undertaken. Training is also undertaken as regards to potential large-scale flooding and exercises are undertaken on the Menai Straits. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that the Fire Service has a duty under the Fire & Rescue Services Act to collect and maintain risk information on known risks; Fire Officers regularly review the risks of sites i.e. Holyhead Port. The Chief Executive raised that questions have been raised at a previous meeting of this Committee as to the fire risk at Newborough Forest and the ability of the emergency services to reach the forest due to traffic issues experienced, especially during the holiday season with people visiting the area. The Area Officer responded that tactical plans are in place to ensure that the Fire Services can respond to incidents that may arise and specialised vehicles attend such incidents. He further said that regular visits are undertaken to the Newborough Forest site together with other agencies such as NRW.
- Reference was made to concerns that due to the geographical rural areas of the Island that the Fire Services could not attend within the specified 20 minutes respond time with the potential of risk of loss of lives. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that the areas that are harder to reach within the specified 20 minutes respond time, fire engines from the mainland will also assist the crews on the Island. He referred that the purpose of the Emergency Cover Review consultation was to review and improve the procedures the Fire Service currently provides and changing duty systems within the 'whole-time' fire stations to release full-time fire fighters to work within rural area. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer further said that 18 fire engines are available daily within the region. Fire Engines can also be moved into more strategic locations if the need arises.

It was RESOLVED to thank the representative from the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service for attending the meeting.

4 WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICES UNIVERSITY NHS TRUST

The Chair welcomed Mr Jason Killens, Chief Executive of the Welsh Ambulance Services, and Ms Estelle Hitchon, Director of Partnerships and Engagement, to the meeting.

The following were points of discussion by the Committee:-

- Questions were raised as to how long patients on Anglesey wait for an ambulance to respond following an emergency call and what plans are in place to improve the respond times. The Chief Executive of the Welsh Ambulance Services responded that it is dependent as to the category of the emergency call and from where the ambulance is responding to the call. He noted that on average the ambulances will not respond from the Ambulance Station but from an Emergency Department when they have concluded an emergency response to another patient. The respond time for patients who are categorised as requiring emergency assistance (category red) i.e. heart attack, seizures, and unconscious patients, is 8 minutes in 65% of calls. The target, at present, nationally and locally is currently not been achieved with a response time up to 10 minutes, which does vary, during the day and evenings. The Chief Executive further said that funding from Welsh Government has seen the Ambulance Services investing considerably over the last 4 years in the recruitment of over 400 front line clinicians to the service. However, emergency calls categorised as life-threatening, have doubled and there have been significant delays in handing over patients to Emergency Department across the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. Whilst the Ambulance Service has invested to improve the service to increase efficiency, with Paramedics and Clinicians within communities that do not need an ambulance to take patients into hospital, the pressure on the Ambulance Service continues. The Director of Partnerships and Engagement said that development of staff is taking place on the Island with Emergency Medical Technicians training to become Paramedics. 2 Paramedics have also joined the team on Anglesey which will allow for patients to have fully qualified staff to attend and to be able to prevent people from going into hospital. Further questions were raised that some patients are having to wait for hours for an ambulance to attend. The Chief Executive agreed that some patients who have no life-threatening illnesses are having to wait long periods of time for an ambulance to attend and waiting outside A+E departments. However, this is the reflection of the situation that exists across the emergency care and adult social care services.
- Questions were raised as to what the arrangements for prioritising requests are when there is significant demand on the Ambulance Service. The Chief Executive responded that all emergency 999 calls are categorised on the time that the emergency service will respond. There are long delays in the transfer of patients into A+E departments with queues of ambulances waiting outside which results in further delays to respond to additional emergencies that the ambulance service receives. The delays in transferring patients are a result of problems with the flow within the hospitals, with patients who are medically fit to be discharge taking up beds. This is due to problems within the adult social care system which is under pressure to provide care packages for patients to return home.

- Questions were raised as to the average waiting times in an ambulance outside A+E at Ysbyty Gwynedd and how do waiting times compare with other area. Further questions were raised as to what degree could joint working with social care alleviate or decrease waiting times. The Chief Executive responded that the target time for the transfer of patients into A+E's is 15 minutes and an expectation that the ambulance crew would have 15 minutes to clean and prepare for their next patient. However, the transfer and preparedness for the next patients is on average 2 hours across Wales but North Wales is a challenge area for transfer of patients into hospital. He further said that there are, on average, 1,500 patients every day, across Wales that should be cared for safely within the local communities. The Director of Partnerships and Engagement said that both the Health Board and Social Services Departments are facing increased demands for social care and the need for patient safety within their home environment. Reference was made by the Committee as regards to other patient alternative transport providers i.e. Môn Medics and Medic 1. Questions were raised whether these providers could alleviate the waiting time for the Ambulance Service to attend patients. The Chief Executive responded that whilst the Ambulance Service responds to emergency 999 calls it also provides services to transfer patients and non-emergency patient care. The Ambulance Service also provides the urgent care system NHS 111. Volunteers are used extensively across North and West Wales with regards to the non-emergency transfer system for patients to attend out-patients planned appointments. Volunteers who are trained and equipped by the Ambulance Service as First Responders and Welfare Responders within local communities are available for life threatening emergencies whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive. He referred to the non-NHS providers which has a limited capacity. The Ambulance Services does not routinely use non-NHS providers for emergency activity due to the quality and safety of the services provided compared to the standard that is required. He highlighted that having additional ambulances to take patients to A+E departments is not the solution to alleviate the problems encountered in waiting times.
- Questions were raised as to the percentage of Ambulance Services' staff working with patients on Anglesey who can speak Welsh. The Chief Executive responded that staff are encouraged and supported to speak and learn Welsh across the region. The Director of Partnerships and Engagement said that the Ambulance Service has recently been incorporated within the Well-being and Generations Act and the priorities will be as to how to develop staff locally and encouraging young people into the Ambulance Service as a career across the service.

The representatives from the Wales Ambulance Service needed to attend another meeting and they agreed that they would send written response to the remaining questions the Committee wished them to respond.

It was RESOLVED to thank the representatives from the Wales Ambulance Service for attending the meeting.

ACTION : That the remaining questions by the Committee be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the Welsh Ambulance Service for a written response.

5 GWYNEDD AND YNYS MÔN PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT: 2023/24

Submitted – a report by the Chief Executive for consideration by the Committee.

The Chair said that the Portfolio Member for Corporate and Customer Experience would present the report as the Leader of the Council, Councillor Llinos Medi, has resigned as Leader as she has been elected as the Member of Parliament for Ynys Môn. The Committee congratulated Councillor Llinos Medi on her election and paid tribute to her work for the benefit of the residents of Ynys Môn.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate and Customer Experience said that he wished to thank Councillor Llinos Medi for the work she has incorporated into the Public Services Board. He noted that the report reflects what has been achieved as a Board to improve the well-being of communities during the period 2023/2024. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act also established the Public Services Boards with representation from public bodies and the third sector. He referred to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board well-being aims to mitigate the effects of poverty; improve the achievement of children and young people and support communities to work towards zero net. The Portfolio Member for Corporate and Customer Experience further said that the priorities align with the Well-being Plan and objectives of the Public Services Board with regards to the Healthy Weight Plan and the Welsh Language. He gave examples of the work achieved by the Board over the last year which were incorporated within the report.

The following were points were discussed by the Committee:-

- Reference was made that the Annual Report discusses the first year of the Well-being Plan : 2023-2028. Questions were raised as to what added value was introduced by working in partnership. The Gwynedd & Anglesey Public Services Board Programme Manager responded that all the Board Members have shown a willingness to work in partnership within the Public Services Board to improve the priorities and well-being of the residents of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The partner organisations can share experiences which have seen immense improvement over the years. She gave examples of the work undertaken by the Board in addressing the challenges of organisations in the recruitment and retention of Welsh speaking staff and 17 organisations have shared their good practice in the recruitment of staff. Questions were raised about whether the pay structure could be a reason why young people are leaving the Island. The Programme Manager responded that the pay grades for employment was not the main reason why people were not applying for posts within the 17 organisations that were consulted with. Many of the problems in recruitment are practical reasons i.e. as to how the job description has been complied which might result in people thinking that their Welsh ability is not up to the required language skills. The Programme Manger further referred to the Active Travel Plan that has been discussed within the Board and the Isle of Anglesey County Council has been leading on the work and have shared good practice with other organisations within the Board.

- Questions were raised as to how the Public Services Board fits into the complex regional partnership structures and maximise collaboration to avoid duplication on many of its workstreams. The Programme Manager responded that the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Board is determined not to duplicate the workstreams of the partner organisations. She gave an example that the Board has adopted a whole system approach to the Healthy Weight priority and incorporated the work of the RPB to add value to the work undertaken and to avoid duplication and ensure added value. The Programme Manager referred to the work undertaken as regards to the Welsh Language and work has been undertaken with the ARFOR project and the Welsh Language Commissioner to contribute to increasing opportunities and to improve the use of the Welsh language. The Portfolio Member for Corporate & Customer Experience referred that partner organisations have shared the work they have undertaken as regard to 'zero net' which supports the Public Services Board to share experiences and examples of good practice.
- Questions were raised as to what opportunities, challenges and risks face the Public Services Board going forward. The Programme Manager gave examples of the joint-lobbying of the Board on strategic issues i.e. an invitation has been given to Mr Ken Skates AM, the Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport, to the next meeting of the Public Services Board to discuss the potential of a third crossing over the Menai Straits. She referred that Rural Travel Network is an issue within rural communities. She further referred to challenges faced by the Board in attracting financial resources regionally and the Board need to be at the forefront in attracting regional funding. The Programme Manager referred to the risks of duplication as has been reported earlier within the meeting.
- Questions were raised as to what extent has the cost-of-living crisis been seen to have an impact on the ability of the Public Services Board's partners to deliver against the key targets. The Programme Manager responded that the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant effect on the work of the Board. The priorities of the Well-being Plan have been put in place to recognise the effect of the cost-of-living crisis within local communities.

It was RESOLVED to accept the Annual Report for 2023/2024 and to note the progress against the 2023-2028 Well-being Plan which was published in July, 2023.

ACTION : As noted above.

6 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 2024/2025

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme for 2024/2025 was presented for consideration.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2024/2025;**

- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM O JONES
VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR FOR ITEM 3 ONLY**