
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15.11.12

Present:

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn – Chair

Councillors: Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Christopher Hughes, Elin Walker Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Siôn Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Wyn Williams and R. Hefin Williams.

**Co-opted Members
with a vote on education
issues only:**

The Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Siân Gwenllian (Education) – for Items 4 and 5
Councillor R H Wyn Williams (Care)
Councillor Paul Thomas (Gwynedd Iach).

Officers: Dafydd P Lewis (Corporate Director), Dewi Jones (Head of Education – for Items 4 and 5), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Gareth James (Members' and Scrutiny Support Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' and Scrutiny Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Huw Edwards and Peter Read, Mrs Rhian Roberts (Dwyfor Governors Parents Representative) and Mr Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Governors Parents Representative).

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made reference to Councillors Huw Edwards and Peter Read who had been unwell recently and he wished them a full and speedy recovery.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 13 September, 2012, as a true record, subject to the following amendments:

- (a) Item 4 – Change in Health Care in North Wales – point (f) – change the first sentence to readit was proposed to extend the model that has been trialled in North Denbighshire .. rather than 'trialled in Denbigh'.
- (b) Change the word "Allt Wen" to Alltwen, one word in points (ff), (ng) (i) and (iv).

4. CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The request of the Head of Education was considered to co-opt representatives from the Teaching Unions to serve on this Scrutiny Committee.

(a) The Head of Education reported that two representatives from the Teaching Unions used to attend meetings of the Council's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee prior to the elections in May. Whilst accepting that the nature and work of the Committees was different to the previous system, a request had been made by the Unions for the Committee to re-consider the decision it took on 7 June 2012 and nominate two representatives from amongst them onto the Services Scrutiny Committee under the governance of this new Council. The Head of Education drew the attention of the Members to this as it would be useful for them to be part of the discussions, not only as there were more and more expectations for Head teachers these days to be responsible for school finance, but also it was deemed that as professional people they had an useful and worthy contribution to the discussions.

(b) In response to a query from a Member regarding the right to re-consider the decision made by this Scrutiny Committee, the Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager confirmed that following guidance from the Monitoring Officer it was possible to re-consider this as it was not the Cabinet's operational resolution.

(c) The following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- There was no objection to the suggestion and it would be useful to receive a contribution from the Teaching Unions on condition that they accepted that they had no vote
- If the request was granted that representatives should also be invited from the Carers Unions of Social Services
- There was concern that the terms of reference of this Scrutiny Committee were too wide to be able to scrutinize and challenge effectively and the work should be split into three namely education, health and other matters.

(ch) In response, the Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager explained that it was intended to consider the Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference at the Council's annual meeting next May, following preparatory work on the constitution by the Monitoring Officer.

Resolved: Approve:

(i) the request of the Teaching Unions to elect two representatives to serve on the Services Scrutiny Committee in a role without a vote

(ii) in the same manner, to invite Carers Unions from Social Services to nominate representatives to serve on this Scrutiny Committee in a role without a vote

5. EDUCATION STRATEGY

(a) The Cabinet Member for Education reported that the Council had already approved the strategy for the re-organisation of schools without objection in 2009, in order to develop and enrich the education system and improve the experiences of the County's children and young people.

(b) The new Council's Priorities Plan was formulated following the May elections and the Cabinet's resolution in October this year was to accept the direction outlined in the plan and set out specific work fields namely:

- (i) Prioritising a review of the primary education provision in the Groeslon area to include Carmel and Bronyfoel (Fron).
- (ii) Proceed and move the discussion on the situation of schools in Meirionnydd forward and report further on the details of the plan to the Cabinet.
- (iii) Conduct research into the situation regarding empty places in the county's schools and consider plans to reduce these.

(c) It was explained that the Re-organisation Working Group under the previous system included all party members and had evolved into a Consultative Panel. The Cabinet Member welcomed the desire of this Scrutiny Committee to assist her and input to discussions in order that she and the Cabinet could make decisions. It was emphasised that the views of Members of this Scrutiny Committee were valuable to her.

(ch) The following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- Under the previous system the Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and one Member from each Political Party served on the Consultative Panel
- It was not necessary for the Cabinet Member to convene a working group and the only role of the Members would be to scrutinize her final decisions, however, it was noted that she had invited Members of the Scrutiny Committee to take part in the process and assist her.
- Although it was important for Members to be able to discuss issues face to face with the Cabinet Member and the establishment of a Working Group would be a means to influence and voice arguments, bearing in mind that there was a duty on members to be informed of the situations that face the County's schools.
- That other Counties had adopted Cabinet procedures which were more democratic and open than what had been established in Gwynedd.
- It was stressed that the scrutiny system and the framework of any working group dealing with monitoring should be the main concern before the opposition parties.
- It was suggested that the working group should include the Chair or Vice-chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee, a member from each political party who serve on the Scrutiny Committee, a representative from the Church in Wales and a Governors' representative.
- That it would be useful for all the Members of the Services Scrutiny Committee to receive agendas of the Working Group's meetings.

Resolved: (a) Establish a Working Group to include the following Members to assist the Cabinet Member in the process of implementing the work programme to re-organise the County's schools:

- (a) Chair or Vice-chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee**
- (b) Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts**
- (c) Cllr. Dewi Owen**
- (d) Cllr. Alwyn Gruffydd**
- (e) Cllr. Siôn Wyn Jones**
- (f) The Reverend Robert Townsend, Church in Wales Representative**
- (g) Mr Dylan Davies, Parent Governors Representative**

(b) That the Education Cabinet Member sends an agenda, for information, to all other Members of the Services Scrutiny Committee.

6. LEISURE CENTRES

(a) A verbal report was received from the Gwynedd Iach Cabinet Member and the Corporate Director (DPL) following a request by this Scrutiny Committee for a progress report on the Leisure Centres review. The Cabinet member gave some background information by stating that re-structuring had occurred with two Departments to form the Social Services, Housing and Leisure Department with the service taking on a more proactive stance to make a positive impact on the public's health following guidance from public health.

(b) Four different reviews were undertaken in this field over a period of time and the Corporate Director explained the Council's system for strategic reviews when it was asked

- What is the purpose of the service
- How is the service provided
- Are there other options

(c) As part of identifying savings the Leisure Service offered to close a Leisure Centre however, the Council resolved not to close the Centre and proposed to look at different ways to run and maintain the service which was the subject of the latest review for about two years.

(ch) Stemming from the initial steps of the above review, they came to the conclusion that the main purpose of the service was to improve the health of the population and normalise a healthy way of living. Therefore, as a result it was noted that there was much more emphasis in Leisure Centres on improving health, living healthily with a more appropriate message for the service. In addition, evidence was collected via questionnaires and focus sessions on the views of the population regarding leisure in general. Whilst half of those who responded used leisure centres the conclusion was that walking and hiking were the most popular activities. Some obstacles were identified to undertake active activities, distance from facilities, location, cost and also lack of information regarding what was available.

(d) Following this, an external consultant conducted research by collecting information and offering a way forward. The research noted the challenge to the Service namely

- Old buildings
- Dispersed area with a small population
- Leisure centres not making a profit
- The needs of areas were different
- Lack of collaboration between agencies/bodies

however, there were also strengths in Gwynedd such as:

- Natural environment
- network already exists
- enthusiastic communities
- staff resources with different expertise

- links with various bodies such as health, GP's etc.
- customer satisfaction was high

(dd) The Corporate Director however, noted that there was a significant financial challenge for the Council with the savings pack in the sum of £16m and the forecast for the future was worse. It was noted that Gwynedd spent £1m per annum above the Welsh average on leisure services.

(e) The review had reached a point of identifying the opportunities however it was necessary to decide if the main purpose of leisure centres was a means to improve health. Attention was drawn to the fact that more use of leisure centres reduced the demands on other services in terms of health difficulties across the population.

(f) In conclusion, the Corporate Director noted that work was on-going to tailor the service to the population that will lead to decisions to be considered by the Cabinet regarding changing the Leisure Centres estate in Gwynedd as there were too many of them in comparison with the population and therefore there was room for rationalisation by considering:

- If they were located in the correct places
- do they provide suitable facilities
- externalise leisure as a service – e.g. arms-length company, trust
- maximise the use of leisure centres e.g. more of a community role

Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the contents of the above presentation and they highlighted the following points:

(i) concern was highlighted by a Member, who was part of the Working Group and had dealt with the review, that some of the recommendations that emanated from the external consultant's review were not acceptable. The Working Group had discussed the need to consider how to retain young school leavers and continue with leisure activities.

In response, the Corporate Director noted that some of the recommendations could be considered. The Cabinet Member added that schools in this County made much better use of leisure centres than other counties, however, it was agreed that they had to get to grips with this and try to promote or identify activities that were sustainable.

- (ii) was it not possible to look at the transfer of leisure centres to successful gyms in the private sector
- (iii) that health should be looked at in a holistic way in collaboration with other services including mental health and persons with learning disabilities
- (iv) the view was that the leisure service was a service and not a business and it had a positive impact not only on communities but also as a resource for tourists. The Committee should receive information regarding the actual costs which was key to maintaining the population's health.

In response, the Cabinet Member stated that this work was on-going.

(v) it was felt that the leisure service was very important and the private sector should not interfere and could not community use be promoted more by encouraging clubs to hire rooms and with the charges published locally.

In response, the Corporate Director noted that the service had identified increasing charges as one way of contributing towards the efficiency savings.

(vi) In response to an enquiry regarding re-establishing the Working Group (that had been operational prior to the Elections in May with this work) the Corporate Director noted that there was no more work to be undertaken by the Working Group and that the next step was to receive guidance from the Cabinet regarding future direction.

(vii) consideration should be given to alternative ways of attracting grants by collaborating with Bangor University in order to conduct research on the impact of fitness on mental health.

(viii) a summary of the presentation together with the financial facts regarding the value of the service in the future would be appreciated.

(ix) that an officer from the Education Department should be invited to input to the discussion regarding pupils' awareness of the importance of fitness.

Resolved: (a) To accept, note and thank the Cabinet Member for the presentation.

(b) Request that the Corporate Director provides a summary of the presentation to include the financial facts to Members.

7. PHYSICAL DISABILITY COMMISSIONING PLAN

The Commissioning Manager reported on the success of the consultation meeting held recently in Porthmadog with service users. 30% of the users responded to the questionnaire that was sent to them and their views would be fed into the Commissioning Plan referred to above and presented to the Cabinet at the start of the new year.

The main findings of the questionnaire were expanded upon:

- (a) concern regarding advice and information on housing issues
- (b) the response of Telecare users on the whole was positive with 30% stating that it was an excellent service, 20% stating that it was poor with the remainder stating that it was satisfactory.
- (c) Response to equipment and adaptations was very positive with 43% stating that it was an excellent service and 10% stated that it was poor. In this field it was noted that a formal joint agreement, under section 33 of the Health Act 2006 with the Health Service would be signed in Spring where there will be a joint-depot at Bryn y Neuadd Hospital to distribute equipment to users across Gwynedd.
- (d) Response to activities was not as good with users noting that they were eager to have more opportunities during the day. It was noted that people's needs were different and that it was difficult to address everyone's needs. However, the type of activities were discussed that would address the needs of some people via direct payments (transfer of money to users to buy a day care service themselves) it would be possible to do this with those that were willing and anxious to control the day service themselves.
- (e) Some people complained about respite care and one of the problems was that the service did not take people's age into consideration. However, the registration of

one of the homes was changed to be able to accept people with physical disabilities and it was known that one family was happy with the provision.

Members were given an opportunity to challenge the officers on the results of the questionnaire and the following points were highlighted:

- (a) It appeared from the meeting in Porthmadog that 76% of the users were unhappy with the service and stated that they did not get any returned calls having telephoned for assistance. Galw Môn had been changed to Galw Gofal and had been moved to Colwyn Bay and users did not get a response in urgent cases. It was noted that it was important when such systems did not work to ensure that alternative arrangements were ensured. It was understood that the telephone number had changed and users were not aware of this.
- (b) The importance that this service was at its best.
- (c) The statistics did not reflect well bearing in mind that only 30% had noted that the Telecare service was excellent – this percentage should be 80% – 90% and considering that this service was a very important link for users.
- (d) Reference was made to the Daffodil projections which anticipated that by 2030 there would be a decrease in the number of people 18-64 with a physical disability, however, this contradicted the messages received from the County's schools namely that the numbers of children with disabilities were increasing.
- (dd) In response to the above, the Commissioning Manager explained that it would be true to state that there would be an increase in the number of children with learning disabilities over the next 5 years and research conducted some years ago indicated an assumption that there would be an increase in learning disabilities up to 2020. In terms of physical disabilities, the Commissioning Manager was of the view that the age population was decreasing according to the Daffodil projection.
- (e) that the link and collaboration with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board should be strengthened for the maintenance and re-use of equipment.
- (f) In response, the Senior Manager Adult Services explained that the service had been collaborating to strengthen arrangements in the context of the Bryn y Neuadd Centre with equipment being recycled and money had been invested to ensure that the users received the relevant equipment.
- (g) In response to a query regarding the fact that only 7 people had received an enablement service, the Senior Adult Services Manager explained that the turnover within the field was low.
- (h) That there were many complaints about the enablement scheme namely that the home care service was only provided for six weeks by the Council and that users had to receive care from private companies once the Council service had ended. The importance that users were aware of this arrangement was noted as users became accustomed to and knew the carers and then had to change carers following the six weeks.
- (i) In response, the Commissioning Manager noted how important it was to have consistency in one service, however, unfortunately this was not always possible. The market had changed specifically in the Meirionnydd area as providers found it

difficult to recruit staff in the area and at times it was necessary to buy the services of private providers from Powys.

(j) In response to a query regarding the continuation of the enablement scheme for more than six weeks, the Senior Manager Adult Services noted that they did try to be flexible.

(k) It was confirmed that the cost for Telecare was the same across the County.

To conclude, the Care Cabinet Member noted that an officer had been appointed for the Telecare provision and it was trusted that this service would move forward. The work undertaken by the Disability Sports Wales Development Officer to attract grants to sports clubs for people with disabilities was applauded. It was also trusted that a Disabilities Champion could be appointed soon to Gwynedd Council.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.

9. DISABILITY AND AUTISM

The Care Cabinet Member reported that he and Councillor Elin Walker Jones had met several items regarding autism and reference was made to Kinsale School, Hollywell which provided a service across North Wales and England. A meeting was held with Mr Alwyn Rowlands, Chair of North Wales Gwynedd and Anglesey Autism and Asperger's Committee and it was understood that the need for this type of provision was not sufficient to establish a viable provision in Gwynedd. It was proposed to discuss this further in partnership with the Councils of Anglesey and Conwy to find the need for a provision in the first place and if it was possible to establish a purpose built viable provision for 10 individuals in north west Wales. There was no assurance of money for the provision, however, they would re-visit the matter and support any venture to try and move the development forward.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the report.

10. OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONING PLAN

The Senior Adults Services Manager reported on the need to raise awareness within the care service for a 'Dignity in Care' Charter which had been officially launched in April 2009 which promoted the following elements:

- Respect
- Privacy
- Self-esteem
- Day to day control over Care

Research work had been conducted by Age Concern and a small sample had been taken in different location as part of the research namely seven residential care homes, four Home Care providers (public), visits to homes for discussions together with telephone conversations with users.

Good results had been received on the whole from residential care homes stating that they had respect, privacy, felt that they were treated as individuals and they were happy with the service. The results for Home Care were similar and the carers who visited

were respectful to the users and they felt that they were in control. Three complaints were received, which had received worthy attention. It was felt that the arrangements were heartening, however, it was necessary to ensure that the service continued to succeed. The arrangements were monitored and it was noted that it was important for the users to feel that it was they who were in control.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- (a) In response to a query regarding if users were anxious to receive a home visit later than what was offered, the Senior Adults Services Manager noted that the service tried to ensure arrangements to deal with the wishes of the users and in such cases direct payments worked better where the users buy the services to address his/her needs.
- (b) It would have been beneficial to have invited Councillor Gareth Thomas, Champion for Adults, to this meeting to listen to the discussion.
- (c) Concern regarding the cooperation between Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd and Social Services to achieve necessary work for users
- (d) In response, the Senior Adult Services Manager, recognised that there was room to improve the above relationship and that work had been made to look at adaptations and to have an easier system for implementation. The Care Cabinet Member gave an undertaking to discuss the matter further with the relevant Cabinet Member.
- (e) In response to a query regarding if direct payments would reflect the service received or would the service be conditional to a ceiling of £50, the Commissioning Manager for Adult Services explained that £50 was the maximum in accordance with the Council's charging policy. A rate of approximately £11.00 per hour was paid in direct payments in order that users could buy a service themselves compared with those who receive the service from the Council. Only a small percentage would take advantage of the direct payments system. Assessments were undertaken to work out the hours to respond to users' needs. If there was a change in policy then the Assembly government could set their own ceiling or Members could create their own policy and as a result users would have to pay more.
- (f) That the pressure on this service would increase in the future and the changes to the benefits payment system would add to this and would impact 11,000 families in Gwynedd.
- (g) Linked to the above point, it was asked from the point of view of older people, if the Council was responding
- (h) the Care Cabinet Member noted that an officer from the Finance Department was researching the impact of the reforms of the benefits payments system on Gwynedd and he promised that he would request a report to full Council.
- (i) Councillor R H Wyn Williams was thanked personally for his praiseworthy work as part of his role as the Care Cabinet Member.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents and thank the officer for the report together with the above observations.

10. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The latest version of this Scrutiny Committee's work programme was submitted.

Resolved: To discuss the work programme at a meeting of the Scrutiny Preparation Committee to be held on 22 November 2012.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.45pm.