



PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 30TH JANUARY 2020 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Pritchard – Chair
Councillor G. Kirby – Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs E. Aldworth, Mrs C. Forehead, L. Harding, C. Mann, Ms B. Miles, Mrs M. Sargent and L. Whittle.

Outside Bodies:

S. Morgan (Natural Resources Wales) and A. Hussey (South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority)

Together with:

P. Cooke (Senior Policy Officer), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Etheridge, E. Forehead, J. Ridgewell, G. Johnston, R. Saralis and J. Taylor. together with S. Tiley (GAVO).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 11TH JULY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the Forward Work Programme for the Partnership Scrutiny Committee from January 2020 to July 2020.

Following consideration of the Forward Work Programme, the Scrutiny Committee were asked to note that Volunteer and Apprenticeships has been scheduled for consideration at the next meeting and January and July 2021 meetings will consider 'Best Start in Life' and 'Safer Communities'.

In addition, a Member requested that further progress reports and information be provided around progress against the Wales Audit Office Recommendation, on particular, recommendation 4, 'To help build capacity consistency and resourcing of activity we recommend that the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association in their review of strategic partnerships take account of, and explore, the findings of this review'. Officers agreed that this could be provided as a future agenda item and will make enquiries as to progress.

RESOLVED that subject to the additions specified above the Forward Work Programme for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee be approved and published.

5. HALF YEAR PROGRESS UPDATE – THE CAERPHILLY WE WANT WELL-BEING PLAN 2018-2023 (APRIL 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 2019)

The report provided Members of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee with an update on the half year performance updates presented to the Caerphilly Public Services Board on 7th October 2019 and the 10th December 2019.

The report provided the performance reports examined by the Caerphilly Public Services Board (PSB) at its last two meetings and included updates provided to the PSB on progress against the Actions and Enablers in 'The Caerphilly We Want 2018-2023' well-being plan for the period from April 2019 to September 2019, which were appended to the report.

It was outlined that the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meet biannually, while the PSB meets quarterly and therefore this affects the information that Partnerships Scrutiny Committee sees at each of its meetings.

It has been previously agreed that the Scrutiny Committee be circulated the performance reports subsequent to each PSB meeting, in order to inform questioning and allow members to decide which officers from partner organisations they would like to attend scrutiny. It was noted that the reports for this meeting have been circulated with a request that members considered which witnesses they wished to call by 24th January 2020.

Partnership Scrutiny Committee has set its Forward Work Programme to consider each of the 10 areas (Communications and Engagement; Procurement and Commissioning; Volunteering; Apprenticeships; Safer Communities; Resilient Communities; Asset Management; Best Start in Life; Good Health and Well-being; Natural Environment) in more in-depth thematic reviews at each of its meetings. Therefore, given the 5-year cycle of the Well-being Plan, it was noted that each of the themes will be scrutinised in depth at least once.

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has previously received in-depth items on Resilient Communities and Good Health and Well-being, and a report is to be presented on the Natural Environment at this meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and welcomed Mr P. Cooke – Senior Policy Officer, T. McMahon - Community Regeneration Manager, S. Mutch - Early Years Manager to provide the Committee with an in-depth performance review on the PSB Well-being plan.

In considering the work undertaken under AA1: Best Start in Life, a Member sought further information on the development day at Bedwas and Fochriw Primary Schools. The Committee noted that with the use of specific funding, a bespoke package was provided, for a day each, centred around Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) and work was undertaken to provide support and information to children and young people on keeping safe. It is anticipated that this will be embedded across these schools. Members noted that there is not funding available to roll out to all schools, however, can be shared via peer roll out, in a hope that this will grow organically across all schools.

Discussions took place around AA2b Apprenticeships and it was noted that a report will be presented to CMT providing a proposed model, which will later be presented to Cabinet outlining a pilot scheme. The scheme will look to match skills and work experience and there will not be any age restrictions to the Apprenticeship Scheme only the proviso that no previous apprenticeships have been undertaken. Members also noted that the Scheme will be centred around the Caerphilly Borough, however other organisations, as well as the PSB and City Deal are looking to undertake similar schemes.

The Partnership Scrutiny thanks the Officers for the updates and welcomed Mr S. Morgan from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), who provided the Committee with an in-depth overview of the performance and work undertaken in each of the Key Tasks.

A Member raised a query in relation to access to greenspaces, in particular, common land and the implications of private owners obscuring public access to the common land and fly tipping. The Officer explained that exceptional work is ongoing with landowners, but a solution has yet to be reached. It is hoped that the work will continue through collaborative working and that the issues will reduce significantly over coming months. In addition, it was noted that intelligence is being developed in order to tackle and prevent fly tipping on common land, and further updates will be provided at later meetings.

A Member sought further information on the performance measures and that there was no risk identified in Improved Access in the Local Community and Improve knowledge of barriers to accessing green space. The Officer explained that this is a challenge but as a significant issue, it is important to prioritise issues in this area and balance resources in order to maintain the measure.

Discussions took place around the Planning process, in particular around biodiversity and the impact on planning applications. It was noted that NRW are consulted on many applications, however it was felt that on occasions the argument within in the report is not strong enough and should be made more notable within the Planning Reports. The Officer thanked the Member for the comment and asked that it be noted that NRW has a limited number of staff and whilst many applications are considered and commented upon, it is often required that those applications where there would be the biggest impact are often prioritised due to workloads. It was agreed that these comments would be fed-back.

A Member sought further information on the ENRAW funding stream. The Officer outlined that funding is allocated on a 3-year basis and a bid was awarded, however WG had determined that due process had not been followed and the bid was re-applied for. It has been suggested that the bid has been accepted and is awaiting final sign off.

In discussing the bid, a Member queries whether NRW would be able to save an area of green space between communities in order to prevent development on the land. The Officer highlighted that through the grant process, support could be offered to purchase the land, but would need to be on the grounds of biodiversity, and within the geographical requirements of the ENRAW grant.

Discussions took place around planning boundaries and green and brown field sites, as well as the implications to the local biodiversity and the Caerphilly Local Development Plan, from which the Officer agreed to feedback a number of comments to NRW.

A Member raised a query around active travel and improving links for cycling. The Officer explained that Active Travel is an area of interest in order to provide more active travel routes that are safe between areas of public use.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the progress updates provided to the PSB be noted and thematic areas be considered for inclusion as part of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

6. PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD'S CONSIDERATION OF THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF PUBLIC SERVICES BOARDS

The report informed the Partnership Scrutiny Committee of a recent report by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) reviewing Public Services Boards (PSBs) in Wales (October 2019) and the consideration of that report by the Caerphilly Public Services Board at its meeting of the 10th December 2020.

The Scrutiny Committee noted that the WAO review was undertaken as a national study and applies to all 19 PSBs in Wales. The report to the PSB considered the points made by the WAO and how they apply to the Caerphilly PSB. It made several recommendations for actions to be taken to the 'Recommendations for Improvement' as they applied to the PSB. As a national WAO report, not all of the recommendations apply to the Caerphilly PSB. Those that do are subject to suggested actions for improvement.

The PSB accepted all the recommendations at paragraph 9.1 of the report on the 10th December 2020. These are currently being worked through by partnership officers.

The Scrutiny Committee noted that the way in which it scrutinises the PSBs performance has been regarded as best practice by the Wales Audit Office.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

The Committee were pleased to note the acknowledgement of the WAO for the excellent working relationship and scrutiny of the PSB and noted the 4 main recommendations.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the chosen actions to deal with the national recommendations of the WAO be noted.

The meeting closed at 7:00p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2021, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR