

**ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
26th JUNE 2015**

(NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING)

Present: Councillor A.P. Cooper (Chair)

Councillors: A. Davies, D.B. Davies, J.A. Davies, I.J. Jackson (Vice-Chair), A.D.T. Speake, S.E. Thomas, W.G. Thomas, D.E. Williams

Councillor S.M. Allen – Substitute for Councillor A. James

Councillor D.J.R. Bartlett – Substitute for Councillor K.P. Thomas

Also in attendance:

Councillor H.A.L Evans – Executive Board Member for Technical Services

Councillor T.J. Jones – Executive Board Member for Environmental & Public Protection

Councillor P.A. Palmer – Executive Board Member for Customer Focus & Policy, Police Liaison, Community Safety, Social Justice / Crime & Disorder

In attendance as an observer: **Councillor J.D. James**

The following officers were in attendance:

Mr. J. Morgan – Director of Community Services

Mr. E. Bowen – Interim Director of Environment

Mr. S. Pilliner – Head of Transport & Engineering

Mr. R. Staines – Head of Housing & Public Protection

Mr. K. Barlow – Senior Manager – Complex Needs & Transition *(for Items 4 and 5)*

Mr. R. Edmunds – Trading Standards Services Manager

Ms. J. Edwards – Principal Business & Development Officer

Ms. R. James – Group Accountant

Mr. S. Moncur – Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement), Hywel Dda University Health Board *(for Items 4 and 5)*

Ms. K. Thomas – Community Safety Manager

Mr. M. Hughes – Assistant Consultant

Venue: Spilman Street Chamber, Carmarthen (10:00am – 12:25pm)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. James, W. J. Lemon, K.P. Thomas, L.M. Stephens (Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies & Collaboration) and E. Dole (Leader).

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2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of party whips.

4. AREA PLANNING BOARD REPORT ON DRUG AND ALCOHOL MISUSE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT 2014/15

The Chair welcomed Mr. S. Moncur (Assistant Director – Assurance Safety & Improvement) to the meeting.

The Committee considered the Area Planning Board's (APB) report for 2014/15 which provided an overview of its key areas of achievement and development in delivering the drug and alcohol misuse strategy. The report covered a range of areas, including an update on recent changes to commissioning arrangements and the provision of substance misuse services. The report also outlined the Board's achievements and impact during the year, its performance and outcome monitoring arrangements as well as priorities for 2015/16. The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked whether the APB Tackling Drug and Alcohol Misuse Commissioning Strategy referred to in Appendix 1, was an active document at present and if so, was there data available to give a clearer picture of the work being undertaken in each priority area. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) confirmed that this overview was from the current strategy which ran until 2015, whilst another strategy was currently under development. The Priority Areas were also 'sub-groups' of the main Area Planning Board who undertook the work of implementing the strategy. The information had been included as an overview and not to provide specific details. However, more detail could be provided to members of the Committee.

Reference was made to Looked After Children and it was asked whether these children were in care because they were abusing substances or because they had been removed from parents who were unfit to care for them due to substance misuse issues. Concern was expressed that children were being brought up in environments where substance misuse was 'normal' and ultimately, it was the Authority that was having to pay as a result of this problem. The Director of Community Services welcomed the Committee's comments which highlighted a real hidden cost to other services resulting from substance misuse. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) referred to the Children and Young People's service which had been introduced in 2013 and facilitated by Drugaid. This had resolved the previous deficit in services for children and younger people which

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had not been well co-ordinated in the past. The Probation Service and the Police were now contributing to jointly commission services which enabled consistent investment across the service. The Senior Manager (Complex Needs & Transition) also informed the Committee that in Carmarthenshire, there were specialist social workers who were able to intervene in such cases and work alongside the Integrated Family Support Service to assist families experiencing difficulties due to substance misuse.

It was asked whether the incidents in which Naloxone had been administered, were as a result of deliberate or accidental overdoses. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) stated that these incidents would have been to address incidents of accidental overdoses.

A question was asked in relation to the drug use figures outlined in the report and whether officers were confident that these were correct, as they appeared to be quite small and at odds with the experiences of many local members in the county's towns. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) confirmed that these were multi-agency figures for those individuals who had been referred to specific services or those who had been brought into contact with services by other means (e.g. through the Police). However, he acknowledged that these figures did not reflect a true picture of those residents with drug-related problems. Even though detection processes and technology were improving, individuals would often not acknowledge their true state and the variety of substances they might have taken. He also noted that this highlighted the impact that one individual or family could have on their community although he stressed that alcohol abuse continued to be the most prevalent problem in the county, rather than drug abuse.

It was suggested that the report offered no light at the end of the tunnel and as long as the Welsh Government continued to expect local authorities to deal with substance misuse, there would be no end to this problem. It was proposed that the answer would be to establish a national treatment service to relieve pressure on the health service, reduce attacks on staff and ensure that the Welsh Government paid for such services. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) suggested that the report, whilst not negating the serious issues that remained, did show progress in seeking to address substance misuse problems in the county. He reminded the Committee that clients were all different and as individuals would respond in different ways to different approaches (e.g. some might respond to the threat of prosecution more readily than others), therefore, a 'one-size fits all' approach would be unlikely to work. Geographically, a single service would naturally disadvantage many rural clients, an issue which the Area Planning Board was seeking to address as it had recently purchased a new vehicle to take drug services out to more rural areas within its region.

It was suggested that the Police needed to be more pro-active in addressing reports of suspicious activity. The Community Safety Manager advised that should elected members have concerns, these should be directed to their relevant Neighbourhood

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Policing Teams. Should members feel that local police officers were not dealing with issues, concerns should be raised with her for discussion with senior Police colleagues.

Clarification was sought as to how the Mobile Needle Exchange provision in rural areas worked and was publicised and whether simply handing out more needles exacerbated the problem. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) informed the Committee that the new vehicle linked in with existing services and was not a new and separate service. The vehicle enabled the Board to deploy proactively in specific areas of need and provide the relevant services. He assured the Committee that staff took every opportunity to engage individuals and refer them to different services. New needles were not simply handed out without first speaking with an individual about their needs. He agreed to circulate more information about the new vehicle to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ACTION PLAN MONITORING – REVIEW OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE TREATMENT SERVICES

The Committee considered an action plan monitoring report outlining the implementation of the recommendations of its Task & Finish Group which had reviewed Substance Misuse Treatment Services in 2013/14. The following issues were discussed during consideration of the action plan:

Reference was made to the inconsistency in relation to prevention work being undertaken in schools which had concerned Group members at the time (Recommendation 2). Clarification was sought as to what work was on-going and whether there was a target date for completing this recommendation. The Community Safety Manager reminded the Committee that the inconsistency was in relation to the time schools themselves devoted to the issue, rather than the prevention programmes provided in schools by the Local Authority's Education & Children Department and the Police. She added that the Drugaid Young Persons Service, commissioned in 2013, complemented this provision and provided additional workshops based on identified need. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) added that whilst there was consistency of the services being taken into schools, this matter would always be on-going and programmes adapted to cater for problems in specific areas and due to the changing nature of the drug scene. The Senior Manager (Complex Needs & Transition) also reminded the Committee that there was 6th Form provision in place at Coleg Sir Gâr to cater for younger adults in these education settings.

It was suggested that school pupils were subject to mixed messages regarding alcohol as they saw their parents' normal behaviour of drinking at home and yet in

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school were warned of the dangers of overconsumption. Clarification was sought as to how this message was marketed. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) suggested that not all youngsters would view their parents' behaviour as normal and consultation with young people had revealed that many had strong views on alcohol consumption and admitted embarrassment at parents' drunken behaviour. The Board continued to be supportive of introducing minimum prices for alcohol and continued to lobby the Welsh Government on this matter.

Reference was made to the recommendation that Executive Board Members visited treatment service providers and reported back to Committee on a regular basis. It was noted that to date, no report had been received and it was requested that future visits be reported back to the Committee on a more regular basis. The Executive Board Member (Community Safety, Social Justice / Crime & Disorder) acknowledged the Committee's request and reassured members that visits had been undertaken to a variety of settings during the past year. However, some visits had been delayed due to the changes in service providers but an update would be provided at a future meeting.

It was suggested that in light of the update, the Area Planning Board had been a positive development for tackling substance misuse on a local level and was more effective than a national service could be. The Assistant Director (Assurance Safety & Improvement) agreed and stated that achieving a 'critical mass' and correct balance between local and regional needs was key in addressing issues such as this. He suggested that an all-Wales service would be less flexible to local needs and would require additional funding to administer. He added that the Area Planning Board was very flexible to local requirements and was relatively inexpensive as it was a partnership of organisations tackling substance misuse, where the majority of the funding went directly to the front-line services.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 1st APRIL 2014 TO 31st MARCH 2015

The Committee received, for consideration, the End of Year Performance Management Report for the services within its remit, for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

Reference was made to the impact of new Police recording procedures on crime figures and clarification was sought as to whether allegations made to the Police could be recorded differently. The Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that this new system was a UK wide and had to be recorded as either incidents or crimes, depending on how the individual making the allegations viewed the situation.

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Reference was made to the Local Transport Forum and following the dissolution of South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH), it was asked how the new Swansea City Bay Region was informed and influenced on transport matters, in light of the new Transport Forum having no formal status. The Head of Transport & Engineering stated that four Local Authorities in south west Wales had the foresight to develop a joint Local Transport Plan (LTP) which had been approved by the Swansea Bay City Region Board. The LTP set the transport priorities for the area and had been submitted to and approved by the Welsh Government. From a Carmarthenshire perspective, he acknowledged that the recent award of funding for the Carmarthen West Link Road and the Cross Hands Economic Link Road were very positive developments. The Interim Director of Environment added that Carmarthenshire was currently reviewing its Regeneration Strategy and that this would provide the Authority with an opportunity of highlighting transport-related matters to the City Bay Region Board.

It was asked whether more could be done to open up disused railway lines as a means for not only providing safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists in rural areas but also regenerating small villages and hamlets. The Head of Transport & Engineering acknowledged that work had recently been completed on a number cycle tracks including the former canal route at Pembrey. In the longer term, the Local Transport Plan included the development of paths in the Tywi Valley on the former railway line, which had economic potential derived from tourism. However, future work would be determined by the availability of funding.

Concern was expressed at the increase of 74% in sexual offences (up 118 to 276) at the year end. The Community Safety Manager acknowledged that this was a concern but was thought to be the result of both historic and recent offences now being recorded following a number of high-profile cases. The Director of Community Services added that this was a UK-wide trend but that there was no evidence that there'd been an increase in new or current cases. He added that what was considered to be categorised as an 'offence' had changed dramatically over the years, which was another reason for the increase in the figures.

The future funding for the Traws-Cambria bus route was discussed and clarification sought as to the future funding of the route. The Head of Transport & Engineering stated that funding had been secured for the 2015/16 year and whilst there was no certainty after this period, officers would continue to work with the Wales Government and lobby for investment. He added that since re-organising the service, there had been significant improvements in the service, especially in terms of its punctuality.

The Committee discussed road traffic collisions, particularly in relation to motorcyclists and it was suggested that the figures for fatalities were misleading in that the majority of those killed were from outside the county. It was also asked whether the percentage of collisions involving motorcyclist which were caused by

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another vehicle, was known. The Head of Transport & Engineering advised the Committee that the number of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads was increasing and this followed a UK-wide trend. He added that officers were now undertaking more detailed analysis of all available data, including the origin of those motorcyclists killed or seriously injured in Carmarthenshire, in order to target interventions such as training.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2014/15

The Committee considered the Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Reports relating to Technical Services, the Public Protection Service and the Community Safety Service, in relation to the end of year position for the 2014/15 financial year. The following issues were raised in relation to the report:

An explanation was sought for the money spent on the former Wernddu Landfill Site. The Group Accountant stated that she did not have the information to hand but that this could be clarified and the reason circulated to the Committee.

Reference was made to school transport and clarification was sought in relation to future funding for this service. The Head of Transport & Engineering informed the Committee that constructive discussions regarding post-16 transport were on-going. Officers were also in dialogue with the denominational schools and the Catholic Diocese, following the recent court judgement to a challenge that involved the City and County of Swansea.

An update on the Nant-y-Ci park and ride facility was requested. The Head of Transport & Engineering informed the Committee that discussions with the Health Board were continuing and income was increasing. However, the numbers using the service were not as high as had been hoped but efforts to increase take up of this particular service were also on-going.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE

The Committee considered an update detailing progress in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous scrutiny meetings. The following issue was raised in relation to the report:

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Clarification was sought as to when the proposed task and finish review would be commencing. The Chair informed the Committee that preparatory work was underway and that Group leaders would be contacted shortly for nominations.

RESOLVED that the update be received.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on Friday 18th September 2015, be noted.

10. TO SIGN AS CORRECT RECORDS THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 15th MAY AND 8th JUNE 2015

Reference was made to discussions at the Committee's meeting on the 8th June (Item 7 – Forthcoming Items) as to whether the Public Rights of Way Unit was now included in the Committee's work remit. The Assistant Consultant and Interim Director of Environment confirmed that whilst the Unit had transferred to the Environment Department, the responsibility for monitoring its work remained with the Community Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on Friday 15th May 2015 and Monday 8th June 2015, be signed as correct records.

SIGNED: _____ (Chair)

DATE: _____