

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 26 October 2022

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Mayer (Chair), S Cocks, P Drewett, F Hussain, J Jones, M Pimm, A Screen, E Stowell-Corten and K Whitehead

In Attendance: Sally Ann Jenkins (Strategic Director - Social Services), Roxanne Green (Regional Partnership Board - Assistant Director Partnership and Integration PMO), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser) and Felicity Collins (Governance Officer)

Apologies: None.

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 October 2022**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 October 2022 were **accepted** and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 **Gwent Regional Integration Fund**

Invitees:

- Sally Jenkins – Strategic Director – Social Services
- Roxanne Green - Regional Partnership Board – Assistant Director Partnership & Integration PMO

The Strategic Director introduced the report to the Committee, explaining that the Regional Partnership Board are looking at the Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (the RIF) which is a 5 year fund to deliver a programme of change from April 2022-March 2027. The Strategic Director gave background to the RIF which is a joint venture across the 5 local authorities and the health board. The RIF has brought about projects that have become a part of the core funding. If the social services wish to bring about transformation, the area is in a position where the financial future looks uncertain.

Members were asked to consider the financial implications and proposed tapered funding model and welcomed any comments they would like the partners to take back to the Regional Partnership Board.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Chair asked what the benefit is of having all of the five authorities, GAVO and TVA working together and if there is a financial saving. The Chair then queried if they operate as a Social Services the same as other authorities.

The Strategic Director advised that it is in statute that the Partners have to have a RPB with the third sectors. It was clarified that the board is in line with the Well-being of the Future Generations Act, which stipulates that every area has an RPB that comes together to join areas in work where possible. It was highlighted that the authorities still have their own separate work but look at areas of work where they have commonalities and share ideas, also where the health services and social services intersect.

The Assistant Director PMO added that they have specific population groups also for example such as children, dementia, adults, all with complex needs. These specific population groups support would benefit from a joint response. The Strategic Director asserted that there is a high degree of operational independence within each local authority, some of these areas of work are delivered locally or regionally. There are differences on those depending on which group and which money for those projects. But the RPB is laid out for them in the constitution.

- A Member queried that they are lacking resources individually and as a group, if it is a Welsh Government Policy, there are a lot of ideas shared as its cross cutting on the board; so the Member asked if the Officer could confirm the best way to do it financially and if there is anything that the partners would like to change.

The Strategic Director recognised that if a comment on possible change was made, that could have a political dimension to the answer. Financially, as the Welsh Government has chosen this way to funnel the grant money to them; whether the officers agree with that is not for discussion. They have chosen this route for funding to ensure that the partners work together and have commonalities, such as the ones that the Assistant Director mentioned.

The Officer confirmed she would not be able to confirm if there is one way better than the other, but it was stressed that if the Council chose to walk away all together, then they would lose that share of money, or go back to Welsh Government and explain they cannot taper the funds due to the change in the financial climate.

- A Member confirmed with the partners that the tapered money is in addition to the Newport City Council's core funding. As that will reduce on a 5 year period, that would leave a sum of money as stated on page 28 on the table and asked the partners to confirm if they would have to find the funds to continue the services with the funds to come out of Newport's core budget. The Member also asked where the taper is coming from.

The Strategic Director confirmed that if they wanted to continue the services then they would have to find the money to fund those projects. The Strategic Director also confirmed that it is in the Terms and Conditions from the funding from the Welsh Government. The Assistant Director PMO gave a bit of background in the negotiations of the RIF, it posed a cliff edge with a lot of risk in the system. She was involved in the earlier conversations advocating for the positions of the statutory partners within Gwent with Welsh Government. Their intention with the tapered funding model is to promote sustainability. It would only reduce to 50%, but it was mentioned that the percentage was going to be much less initially, but they managed to negotiate it to 50%.

To help explain the concept behind the guidance, it was mentioned that the government want the statutory partners to bring existing resources to the table to bring ideas together to benefit those with complex needs. Members were

signposted to the tables in appendix A which sets out what it would mean for the organisation if they adhered to the Welsh Government's terms and conditions.

- A Member queried if the partners have assessed this on the current inflation levels.

The Strategic Director advised that they have assessed the position they are currently in with the current funding under the RIF and advised they are working over the fall out on pay and inflation issues. As noted by the Committee, the inflation is a challenge as it changes frequently. If there were no inflation, then the social services sector would be in a better position to think about the taper and re-purposing of the money but unfortunately it was stressed they are not in that position.

- A Member referred to the table that shows a number of initiatives with the costs in relation to children with enhanced Educare and asked if they are all new projects.

The Strategic Director confirmed that they are all funded under the RIF, some were existing projects under the GRIF which moved under the new RIF. These are not part of the Newport City Council's core budget and clarified that they are from grant funding through the partnership boards. Therefore it was confirmed that most of the projects materialised from the funding of the RIF not the Newport City Council.

- The Member asked the partners if the projects are additional to the core funding.

In response, the Strategic Director advised that they have been able to develop those projects on top of their core funding; therefore they could construct the argument that they are core services. An example was used where enhanced Educare services which prevent children from becoming looked after children is a statutory care for the team. The funding for that is coming from that stream and assured the Members that they are using the funding to ensure that services can deliver to the best of their ability to support the vulnerable individuals. That could be seen as a key service.

- If those services and projects were to stop and not be implemented again, would that increase the strain on the health services?

The Strategic Director confirmed that many of the projects help support people so that they do not go to hospital and also to help patients leave hospital. It was explained that if the council were to have to use the taper, it would jeopardise those projects and therefore have an impact on those issues.

- A Member asked if the tapering effect is a phrase for a budget cut over time, and if that is the case, it was acknowledged that hospital admissions and discharges are problematic at the moment to the public. The Member went on to ask if having two distinct services; health and social services are problematic to resolving the problem.

The Strategic Director advised that a response is out of her remit due to the political agenda with social and health services. The Officer stressed that working together is imperative to address such issues. There are challenges within that such as winter planning for all of the five local authorities and acknowledged the problems with ambulances and front door emergency services. Most of the work is an attempt to address these issues but explained that they do not have another budget to do that. The Officer felt that particular issue is not with the taper and that there are bigger issues that relate to that.

The Assistant Director explained that with the RPB – the funding does not reduce for 5 years. The model is to help the reinvestment and all parts of the system, so it is trying to support the developments of the systems within this time. The overall budget would stay the same for the RPB but if the tapering were to be pushed back, it would mean all statutory partners would respond and have that conversation with the Welsh Government.

- A Member mentioned under the carers training part; it was highlighted the social care workers have the lowest funding spending wise in the council due to cutbacks. The Member asked how that impacts the training and recruitment.

The Strategic Director felt that the recruitment force is a real challenge but is a nationwide issue also. They have quite a high rate of vacancies in social care but they face an issue in providing domiciliary care. There are pots of money in the council specifically for certain projects and staff for the roles, and they need to retain those for the support.

- The Member also recognised the shortages everywhere in all aspects for staff and asked how the social services have a vision on how to recruit.

The Strategic Director acknowledged the issues agreed that is a challenge and that the staff are exhausted from post pandemic work. There are issues about pay, terms and conditions, staff are exhausted from the work post pandemic. There is a body of work ongoing on how to increase support, how to retain and how to train their staff as it impacts them every day.

- A Member asked if the methodology behind the taper is to encourage services to change over the 5 years of funding.

The Strategic Director confirmed that is to support the innovation with the tapered support. However the challenge is that there are some vital services as mentioned in the earlier discussion. Which may mean that other services would need to be cut due to continue funding after the 5 years.

- A Member asked the partners to confirm how the partnership is working for other Local Authorities.

The Strategic Director explained that Councillor Hughes has recently joined the RPB as Cabinet Member for Social Services. The Officer felt that the working relationship is good, it was mentioned that they do not always agree on everything. The 5 Local Authorities work well together and also disagree with the health board frequently and mentioned that some areas do not have such a good working relationship as Newport does. It was stressed that operationally, there are strong working relationships. It was recognised that the 5 local authorities have different demographics and needs, which can be difficult at times but reassured the Committee that working relationships are strong.

- A Member commented how Newport has a large BAME community; which means that Newport's needs might be different from the other areas.

The Strategic Director stressed that they are able to reflect local differences on the RIF. An example was mentioned where they highlighted the children element, looking at a similar model of care across Gwent. This was delivered and is a successful way of working, as educare services are delivered in a particular way by looking at particular needs of the community and ensuring the understanding of particular needs of Newport's BAME communities.

The Assistant Director added that some work they would not see from the report, Newport has specific elements in the health board plan; such as assisted technology plan which targets unpaid carers work in BAME, where pockets of work have been enabled and developed from working collaboratively. The Partner offered a follow up session that to show the Members what work they do for that.

- A Member asked if the Partners have any figures on unpaid care workers in the area.

The Strategic Director advised they can provide this data. It was explained that they are going to People Partnership Scrutiny Committee in November on Adult Carers and advised the Members they will be looking at that. When the report is ready, the partners agreed to share that report with the committee.

The Cabinet Member added that the Regional PSB is a relatively new group of people who get on particularly well in communication with a range of benefits. It was stressed that the council needs to work with its colleagues to use that money in a targeted response to help Gwent.

Through a pushback in the RIF, as the council has always faced increasingly challenging economic positions; but the reality is that they would not be able to afford the funds for the projects due to the situation.

It was mentioned that conversations have been made with Ministers as a partnership board in sustaining the RIF. It was suggested that the partners push back on the deadlines as the financial implications for the authorities would be detrimental.

The Cabinet Member addressed the Committee that they support the regional model. The Member went on to cover the positives to the joint venture such as the fact they get on well with the other authorities and the health board and look to continue to support the RIF as the authority does get a lot from it. It was emphasised that the partners should not be rushed into major decision making but stressed they are in a position where they have to push back on the taper.

- A Member agreed with the Cabinet Member's comments and stated that the tapering model is problematic due to the current financial situation that the council finds itself in and then asked the Assistant Director to agree whether the current services would suffer if the council adopted the model.

In response, the Assistant Director confirmed that as a Regional Partnership Board, each statutory partner would need to consider the implications of that. It was explained that they could either stop the projects or cut another service to adhere to the terms and conditions and confirmed that the Members' summary was very accurate.

- The Chair of the Committee referred to the partnership website which appeared incomplete and asked for the partners to confirm how the partnership is made up with the delegates.

The Strategic Director confirmed that each of the five authorities have the relevant Cabinet Member, and the Social Services Directors as representatives of their areas, one from GAVO, one from DVA.

The Assistant Director gave a breakdown of the Membership; the Regional Partnership Board Chair, the Chair of the Health Board, the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Board, Independent Member of third sector, Special Advisor

to the Board, 5 Directors of the Social Services from the local authorities, 5 Cabinet Members for Social Services, Housing Representative, Populations Representatives, specific Member acts on behalf of the education officers, Chief Education Officer alongside the 5 Education Officers from the authorities, Citizens Representative, a Housing Association Representative, GAVO, TVA Representative representing third party, with support officers also. It was noted that the membership is quite large of near 28 Members in the discussion.

- The Chair made the comment that the Welsh Government is relying on each individual authority to get on with the taper. As there are local families in Newport who have family in the surrounding authorities, the Member stated he understood that the partnership is working, but not the methodology.

The Strategic Director explained that the structure of groups such as children's services, adult services board, dementia services all come together at different levels. The Director previously sat on the children services board which she deemed a really effective board and now chairs the iScan board which works very well together. The Gwent Adult Board was also mentioned as an example which was effective during covid in working together to address care home issues and challenges with the hospitals. The RPB is there but claimed that the work of these that they have put in is relevant.

- The Chair informed the Partners that he has confidence that they are doing their best but expressed his concern on what exactly the committee are scrutinising and asked the partners to confirm who is scrutinising in how the partnership works together.

The Strategic Director echoed the Cabinet Members' previous point, where the RIF brings in a significant amount of money and even before tapering, the council would have been stuck. It gives the authority a door to other funding streams, for instance the transformation fund. It also gives cross hurdling of ideas and comparisons on the other boards. The Director used a small example of a small psychology service with poor working relationships to begin with at the start, but as a result of working together through the service, they now have very good relationships. This example was shown to explain how collaborative working has helped the authorities. In terms of the scrutiny of the partnership, the Director offered to come back to Committee to inform them about the actual day to day work details.

The Chair and Committee agreed that they would be happy to arrange that.

- A Member commented on the range of different sectors and asked where the vision comes from, and also asked how they measure the KPIs.

The Strategic Director confirmed that the partners measure each other on KPIs and have a significant amount of reporting back to Welsh Government in terms of what the partners do with the funds. The visions all come from the Members of the board.

- Members felt that the large membership of the board does not sound manageable in terms of getting everyone to agree on things.

In response, the Strategic Director assured the Committee that the 28 members all agree on the RIF and Tapering.

- The Chair went onto ask if they are the first committee that this has been to.

The Strategic Director confirmed that they are the third, and that the others all agreed on it.

The Assistant Director added that this is the first committee that she has attended for it and was happy to provide any detail. The agreement through discussion with all partners, it was agreed that it would be detrimental to either service deliverance or financial budgets if they were to intervene the tapered funding model. As a RPB they are being honest and transparent with the Welsh Government as she advised that the tapering would be realised from this April for the start of the next financial year. This explains why it is shown as commencing in the second financial year under the appendix A under financial consequences.

- Discussion ensued amongst the Members as they shared their awareness over the forecast of the financial situation that the local authorities will all find themselves in. A Member felt it was a shame that the report did not transpire the good working partnership relations mentioned in the earlier discussion which would have been helpful for the Committee. It was also mentioned that comments from senior officers in the report did not figure out the issue of where the money will come from at the end of the taper.
- The Members acknowledged that the council will be facing budget pressure in a difficult financial situation and would like to have more information as it is important for the partners to stick together to work through that. It was also mentioned that they may not know how much funding will come from Westminster Government.

The Assistant Director felt it was important to mention an unrelated matter that in statutory organisation, they have to pre-empt the risk. Last year was when the partners felt the cliff edge and with some of the information that they can share; they undertook significant assessments on the impact should they have to stop some of the services. Some were quite specific to the service areas and third party sectors, with a source of income to some employees, as they have around 400 members of staff through the RPB sources across Gwent. These services were seen as critical for the system flow and the partner apologised if the information for the Members was not sufficient and agreed to provide more in-depth detail to the Committee on the points mentioned.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services also responded, stating that there is a unanimous feeling amongst the Members sitting on the RPB on the tapering. As the funding would massively de-stabilise the social services areas going forward. It was mentioned that projects going into 2023, 2023 and 2025 rely on this funding and therefore stressed that the council needs to push back on the tapering, otherwise the impact on the citizens would be dire. The Member explained that this is why they would like to recommend to ministers to push back on the deadline.

- A Member noted with regard to the innovations and improvements and asked if they are financially available for the council given the circumstances. As the authority would need to top up the funding that would be taken away with a taper, the Member felt that it would not be a practical situation. The Chair added that innovation can sometimes come from pressure and that it could be done as that is the authority's priority and acknowledged the pressures that the council faces.
- Discussion ensued and the Strategic Director echoed her support for the Cabinet Member's comments and advised the Committee that it would be helpful for them

to pass on the Members comments that they would like to push back on the tapering to Welsh Government.

A Member confirmed he was happy to agree to that as he expressed his concern on the impact of the taper as it would be difficult to see where the money is going to come from in the future to fund the services and also for impact it could potentially have on hospitals with consequences such as bed-locking.

- A Member asked the partners if they would need to go back to the Welsh Government as the Regional Partnership Board or ask them for a few years longer or one year instead.

In response, the Strategic Director explained that they would be going back to innovation and improvements; therefore they would go back to the Welsh Government to explain that now is not the time for the taper and that innovation is something that they are currently seeking but given the financial situation, it would post a challenge as mentioned by the Members.

The Committee were informed that the Regional Board are chairing a meeting with a Minister tomorrow to discuss with the relevant Ministers.

The Members thanked the partners for their work and for their time. The Members agreed that they would like to clarify their position that the message can be passed on to the Welsh Government that they need to push back on the taper.

Conclusions

- The Committee considered the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.
- The Committee wished to make the comment to Welsh Government that now is not the time for the tapering funding model, as the challenge at present; economic climate is too great. It was agreed that innovation and improvement is desirable in the longer term, however now is not the time to put these services at risk. Not having the funds to be able to run the projects noted in the report would have an enormous impact on the people who rely on these projects for support. The Committee requested that the deadlines be pushed back for the tapered funding model until 2024.
- The Committee asked if comments and views from the other partnership members where this has been presented, could be shared with them.
- Members requested for a further report on the work of the Regional Partnership Board to be brought back to the Committee. Members commented that it would be helpful if the report could include possible case studies to show examples of how the partnership works as the partnership is quite evident.
- The Scrutiny Adviser agreed to arrange with the Strategic Director to bring that report in around March/April time. Members were informed as soon as the adviser receives that update, he would update the forward work programme to include it.
- The Committee asked if they could be provided with the figures of the amount of unpaid carers there are in Newport.
- The Scrutiny Adviser agreed to put the Committee's confirmation of push back in writing in email to the partners which will also be included in the minutes.
- A Member asked if they would find out about the outcome with the Welsh Government on the following day. The Scrutiny Adviser informed them that he

would ask the Strategic Director to see and confirm with the Members when he knows.

4 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

Invitee:

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

a) Forward Work Programme Update (Appendix 1)

Wednesday 9 November

- Norse Joint Venture Partnership
- EAS Value for Money Report

Wednesday 7 November

- VAWDASV
- Shared Resource Services

The Committee will receive annual updates on both.

b) Actions Plan (Appendix 2)

- The Scrutiny Adviser advised the Members that all actions apart from one action are up to date on the action sheet as actioned.
- The Community Safety Update has been considered as an action. The Members were informed that the Scrutiny Adviser is working with Janice Dent on bringing that report to the committee which would likely to be in March/April. The Adviser agreed to let the Committee know when a date has been set.
- A Member asked for clarity on the work programme order as the report mentions that the cabinet has also put together a work programme.

The Scrutiny Adviser explained that when the advisers plan the Forward Work Programme, they also initially work out Cabinet's Forward Work Programme and then work with the Heads of Service to look back at what comes in annually such as the EAS Value for Money Report, the Well-being Plan.

The Adviser informed Members if there is anything that the Members would like the scrutiny team to bring to the partnership committee then that could be suggested with the chair of the committee to include in the draft forward work programme. The Committee were reminded that it is entirely up to them to add or take away items as they please.

- The Member then queried if the committee are mirroring what the Cabinet are working through.

The Scrutiny Adviser raised the Market Stability Report which most recently came to Committee, which was requested by Phil Diamond to go to Partnerships before going to the Cabinet, which then would go to council. It varies amongst reports, as sometimes officers and partners ask for scrutiny input before sending the report to Cabinet and Council.

- A Member asked to clarify if items on the agenda can only be reports.

The Scrutiny Adviser explained that some things come to scrutiny which have not before such as community safety as the Members have specifically asked; as it is a chance to speak with Janice Dent on that.

- The Member wondered if it can be an area of working and not a specific report for discussion.

The Scrutiny Adviser confirmed as long as they fall within the terms of reference.

- The Member asked if there is a list of partnerships that the council has.

The Scrutiny Adviser advised that this was sent to the chair when the committee was formed in May but offered to re-send that list. Members were referred to the list which is in the terms of reference.

Discussion ensued about the upcoming reports and a Member wished to ascertain what the scrutiny committee would be looking at in the meeting with Norse.

The Scrutiny Adviser agreed to circulate last year's report and minutes to give the Members an idea of how to prepare for the meeting as a guideline. If it's about individual queries then that would be taken up outside of the committee. The Adviser explained that they are finalising the scrutiny handout which helps explain what every committee does, such as councillor support as they are looking to update it as it would be going regional. It would be something the officers will send out as a lengthy document but it is an in-depth look at how scrutiny works.

The meeting terminated at 6.13 pm