

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 10 October 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors E Stowell-Corten (Chair), F Hussain, M Pimm, P Drewett, A Screen and B Davies

In Attendance: Phil Diamond (Head of the Regional Partnership Team), Sally Ann Jenkins (Strategic Director-Social Services), Jason Hughes (Cabinet Member for Social Services), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer), Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors C Baker-Westhead, J Jones, A Morris and K Whitehead

1 Declarations of Interest

The Chair and Councillor Hussain noted their membership on the Gwent Regional PSB Scrutiny Committee.

2 Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) Area Plan 2023 - 2027

Invitees:

- Phil Diamond – Head of Regional Partnership Board
- Sally Anne Jenkins – Strategic Director – Social Services
- Councillor Jason Hughes – Cabinet Member for Social Services

The Head of the Regional Partnership Board and the Strategic Director for Social Services gave an overview of the report.

Members asked the following:

- The Committee questioned the effectiveness of the Regional Partnership Board. The Strategic Director highlighted the presence of multiple boards and emphasised the importance of collaboration and shared work.
- The Committee requested a brief on the purpose of the report. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team explained that it consolidated various reports and outlined action points to meet Welsh Government requirements. The Cabinet Member for Social Services emphasised accountability and outcomes. The Strategic Director noted the Regional Partnership Board ensured the five local authorities were working together to address issues highlighted by Welsh Government.
- The Committee expressed concern about the lack of partnership work in leisure trust and physical activity. The Strategic Director clarified that work is being done to include disabled individuals in physical activity and mentioned efforts to support those with GP referrals. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team highlighted the report

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would be scrutinised alongside the Gwent Wellbeing Plan and highlighted in Section 16 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act there is a requirement to set up social enterprises. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team noted they would need to make it clearer within the report.

- The Committee enquired about the advantages for Newport and how they avoid staff demand issues. The Strategic Director explained the statutory nature of the board, the access to the regional integration fund, and the focus on specific needs of small groups. The Strategic Director highlighted that collaboration between the five local authorities allowed for a strong provision, and noted staff competition wasn't an issue as what works best for all authorities was working together which gave them a strong and coherent position.
- The Committee asked about the challenges faced by the Regional Partnership Board. The Strategic Director mentioned budget constraints, the tapering of the Regional Integration Fund, training and career development, staff retention, and the impact of the pandemic and cost of living. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team discussed recruitment efforts in colleges and highlighted the Access to Medicine course at Coleg Gwent.
- The Committee wanted to know how the board planned to avoid using Bed and Breakfast properties for young people. The Strategic Director agreed to provide information and potentially arrange a meeting on the issue.
- The Committee proposed writing to the Welsh Government to oppose the tapering of funding. The Strategic Director and the Cabinet Member for Social Services expressed support for this action, highlighting the potential damage caused by the tapering.
- The Committee noted the lack of information in the report regarding the rise in obesity and emphasised its importance. They enquired about a specific strategy or partnership board addressing this issue. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team mentioned that it was a key point in the wellbeing plan and received priority at the regional partnership board, but there was also a greater focus on addressing it at the local level.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee expressed their gratitude to the officers for their presentation and commended the partnership board for their ongoing efforts. They noted that the document was quite intricate and repetitive, and felt that important information could get lost in the document as a result. While they understood the statutory need to present the report in this format, they suggested future reports could benefit from less repetition and jargon, or even be more concise. This would aid members in better understanding the presented information.
- The Committee requested that the report explicitly detail how the Regional Partnership Board collaborated with Leisure Trusts and local sporting governing bodies to improve recreation accessibility. They also enquired about any ongoing or completed projects in this regard, seeking information on their start dates, locations, success rates, and potential areas for improvement.

- The Committee highlighted the Rapid Rehousing programme and the commitment to not use bed and breakfast accommodation to temporarily house young people, and requested information on the Regional Partnership Board element of this commitment.
- The Committee expressed its intention to write to the Welsh Government, requesting a reconsideration of the planned tapering in the Regional Integration Fund, given the current financial circumstances.
- The Committee enquired whether the partnership had developed a strategy or engaged in cross-partnership collaboration with the Health Team to address the rising levels of obesity in the region.

3 **Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) Annual Report 2022-23**

Invitees:

- Phil Diamond – Head of Regional Partnership Board
- Sally Anne Jenkins – Strategic Director – Social Services
- Councillor Jason Hughes – Cabinet Member for Social Services

The Head of the Regional Partnership Board and the Strategic Director for Social Services gave an overview of the report.

Members asked the following:

- The Committee asked how the Regional Partnership Board would continue to deliver its strategic objectives in the face of challenges. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team highlighted continuous work in partnerships and investment to maximise resources. The Strategic Director expressed confidence in their strong regional position. The Cabinet Member for Social Services emphasised the innovation that comes from partnership work.
- The Committee enquired about addressing the issues of an aging population. The Strategic Director mentioned the need to determine care provisions for all years and fund those needs. They highlighted the increased old and young population in Newport and the importance of regional collaboration.
- The Committee stressed the importance of seeking answers outside the UK. The Strategic Director noted the skilled nature of domiciliary care and the focus on maintaining healthy longevity. The Committee emphasised the vital nature of the service.
- The Committee asked about feedback from service users. The Strategic Director mentioned positive daily feedback and the importance of challenging the level of care provided. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team highlighted the involvement of Citizen and Carer representatives in the board.
- The Committee enquired about offering British Sign Language courses to carers. The Strategic Director explained that training is offered but not universally, though it is being considered.
- The Committee asked about plans or strategies to promote clean air, healthy environments, and green spaces. The Cabinet Member for Social Services mentioned the presence of green spaces in Newport and highlighted projects to encourage

physical activity. The Head of the Regional Partnership Team noted the prioritisation of exercise referral schemes and maximising green spaces.

- The Committee acknowledged the work done by unpaid carers, especially young ones.
- The Committee requested more information on addressing isolation and loneliness within the unpaid care workforce. The Strategic Director noted ongoing efforts in this area.
- The Committee commended the innovative Crick Road Dementia Project highlighted in the report, and the Head of the Regional Partnership Team expressed gratitude for the acknowledgment.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee commended the partnership for their ongoing efforts, and in particular, the excellent work by unpaid and young carers with the burden and pressure they face, whilst also dealing with their own complex needs. It was noted Welsh Government grant funding is being used to provide services for over 19,000 unpaid carers, but only just over 2,000 of those reported feeling less isolated. They were interested in exploring how we can improve uptake from unpaid carers and get more positive feedback.
- The Committee reiterated that the document was lengthy and recommended that future reports be improved by reducing repetition and jargon, or by making them more concise.
- The Committee praised the case study of the Crick Road Dementia Project and spoke of it being innovative. The Committee asked for further information as to whether this was going to be modelled elsewhere in the region.

4 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Invitee:

- Neil Barnett – Scrutiny Adviser

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

Wednesday 8th November 2023, the agenda items;

- Norse Joint Venture Partnership – Strategy and Performance Review
- Draft Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment

Wednesday 6th December 2023, the agenda items;

- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Education Achievement Service - Value for Money 2023-24

The meeting terminated at 11.36 am