

PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor N Clarke – Chairperson

E Dodd
RL Penhale-
Thomas

CL Jones
M Thomas

M Jones
KJ Watts

JR McCarthy

Officers:

Mark Galvin
Gail Jewell

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:-

Councillor A Owen
Councillor C Westwood

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Jones – Personal interest in Agenda item 6, in that he is a Director of a company that provides consultancy services to the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership in tackling Domestic Abuse.

73. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership and Governance O&SC dated 6 December 2016, be approved as a true and accurate record.

74. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, that firstly presented the items to be considered at the Committee's meeting to be held on 10 April 2017, as well as to present a list of further potential items for prioritisation by the Committee.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report, outlined two suggested items to be considered by Members at its next scheduled meeting, whilst paragraph 4.2 suggested three further items for placing on the agenda at a subsequent meeting.

A Member asked if consideration could be given for an update on the City Deal in due course.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the items to be considered at its meeting on 10 April 2017.

Members requested to revisit the City Deal item in approximately 12 months to receive an update on how the project is progressing.

75. WESTERN BAY SAFEGUARDING

The Chairperson welcomed the Invitees to the meeting, and requested the lead Officer to give a brief resume of the report.

The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that the purpose of the report, was to update the Committee with information on the Regional Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children Board, and evidence how partners are working together in collaboration.

She referred to the background information detailed in paragraph 3. of the report, which gave some explanation as to the definition of safeguarding, which basically meant protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Paragraph 4. of the report highlighted certain achievements and the progress that has been made to date.

This section of the report advised that to assist the Safeguarding Boards in carrying out their duties effectively to safeguard adults and children, a number of functions have been delegated to various sub-groups. The sub-groups of the Safeguarding Adults Board were detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report, and following this, the report contained certain priorities it had focussed upon, which included work on two key reviews.

The Head of Children's Social Care added that the Safeguarding Adults Board had responded to Welsh Government regarding both reports that had been put together in respect of both these reviews, as well as giving assurance of actions that have been taken as a result.

She then referred to paragraph 4.8 of the report which outlined the sub-groups of the Safeguarding Children Board, advising that all such sub-groups had individual work plans that linked into the overall Business Action Plan 2016 – 2017 of the Board. The Safeguarding Children Board in addition to its core functions had also focussed its attentions on three key priorities, ie Neglect, Child Sexual Exploitation and Domestic Abuse, and subsequent sections of the report expanded upon work to date in respect of each of these areas.

The Head of Children's Social Care then referred to the Bridgend Operational Safeguarding Group, a body that was committed to practices that protect children and adults at risk. This Group was chaired by the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, with its membership including representatives from partner agencies for example, Health, Police, Education and the third sector.

Superintendent Jones advised that areas of support for Public Protection issues had increased significantly in recent times, and extra staff had needed to be recruited to cater for this increased demand. Further work had been undertaken particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention protocols, in order to for example, raise awareness and reduce instances of Child Sexual Exploitation, and review procedures and processes to more clearly identify those at risk. This work to date had been successful, in that the number of children deemed at risk had reduced to that of

previous, through various packages provided for them together with support from key partner agencies.

A Member enquired the methods by which various partners worked together on a daily basis, to improve support mechanisms for vulnerable adults and children.

Superintendent Jones advised that in respect of the Safeguarding Adults Board, all documents in respect of individuals were now shared with practitioners. As alluded to previously in the meeting, this Board had been very proactive in two pieces of work. One of these was an initiative called "A Place to Call Home" that had been published a few years ago by the Older People's Commissioner. This concentrated on the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales. The overall conclusion of this review, was that too many older people living in these homes have an unacceptable quality of life, and that the view of what constitutes 'acceptable' needed to shift significantly in order to secure improvements needed.

The second piece of work had been termed as "In Search of Accountability", and this detailed the findings of Operation Jasmine, which was a seven year investigation by Gwent Police into allegations of abuse at several care and nursing homes in South East Wales. A Multi-Agency group was established in response to this, from which an Action Plan had been derived in order to define what good care is. Through this Multi-Agency group and with the support of other key stakeholders/the third sector, steps had now been put in place to improve care arrangements in this kind of setting. He added that there were also proactive steps being taken to improve the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Children through methods such as, Quality and Performance and Monitoring Groups, the Policy and Practice Management Group, Strategic Training Management Group (joint with Adults), and the Child Practice Review Group. Superintendent Jones added that all sub-groups had individual work plans that linked into the overall Business Action Plan 2016 – 2017 of the Safeguarding Children Board.

The Head of Children's Social Care added that she could give an assurance to Members, that her Team Managers were very closely connected with cases of Children's Social Care, and that the monitoring of these was very robust and effective as well as being subject to Quality Assurance and auditing.

She added that in Complex Abuse cases, key frontline Managers played a very proactive role in the investigation into these, as well as Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) monitoring and reviewing such cases. Any concerns raised were then reported directly back to herself as the Head of the service. The Head of Children's Social Care further added that her Department worked closely with bodies such as the Police and Health, to support young children subject of abuse, in order to tackle this using a collaborative and multi-agency approach. There were also monthly meetings with paediatricians, in order to ensure that practitioners such as these had as fully an understanding as possible of safeguarding and measures that needed to be taken to protect young people who were at risk of abuse.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.13 of the report, where it quoted that the reporting arrangements into each Local Authority area, Local Service Board or equivalent were inconsistent. He asked Invitees to expand upon this statement.

The Head of Children's Social Care, confirmed that there was not a routine reporting cycle in respect of the above. For example, a Scrutiny Committee in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council would not receive the report before Members today. What the above statement meant, was that there needed to be more consistent reporting mechanisms in place in terms of reporting more on a regional basis.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.12 of the report, where reference was made to the membership of Safeguarding Boards as prescribed within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. He asked if there was Officer representation or elected Member representation on these Boards or both.

The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that legislation directed that Officers from the various partners be represented on these Boards, primarily the Directors of Social Services or equivalent of each of the bodies that made up Western Bay. There was no elected Members on the Boards as legislative guidance did not suggest or direct this.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help added that there was Member representation on the Regional Safeguarding Board in the form of Leaders or Cabinet Members.

A Member referring to paragraph 4.4 of the report and the overall conclusion in respect of the Review of Care Homes, was saddened to see that too many people living in care homes have an unacceptable quality of life. From her experience of rota visits to Homes she felt that some were very good and some not so good, ie not offering many activities etc, for service users who resided there.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager advised that since collaborative working had taken off, a Regional Quality Framework had been introduced across the three participating local authorities (and ABMU), and a provision of this was to ensure Care Homes are now more closely monitored than previously was the case. This had led to the quality of care in homes improving, and this trend was looking to be continued year on year. Since the "Place to Call Home" initiative had been carried out, local authorities now had to give feedback to the Older People's Commissioner, and part of this, included confirmation as to what improvements had been made/were proposed for Care Homes included within the designated Western Bay area.

A Member referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report, where it made reference to the Safeguarding Adults Board having responded to Welsh Government, in respect of the reports regarding improvements made in respect of Care Homes and Operation Jasmine, by giving an assurance of actions that have been taken to secure such improvements. He asked what these actions and assurances were.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager advised that the Older People's Commissioner had undertaken a second round of reporting to the Western Bay authorities, to establish further improvements that have been made in Care Homes. Further work was required in relation to advocacy in these homes, and to also assist any improvement in this particular area, a Collaborative Care Home Advocacy Group had been established. Furthermore she added, an 'open day' in respect of advocacy had been held to look to make improvements moving forward.

A Member referred to paragraph 4.6 of the report, which indicated that there had been several key achievements this year for the Safeguarding Adults Board, as described in this part of the report. He asked if there had been any further such improvements or achievements in this area.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager advised that as well as the achievements identified in the report, there had been National Safeguarding Week, where the aim of this event was primarily to increase awareness of safeguarding for adults (and children). There had also been a conference set-up to look at Operation Jasmine which had also proved to be a successful event she added.

A Member referred to paragraph 4.14 of the report, and that in 2017 a programme of training would be implemented in line with the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. She asked when this would commence.

The Deputy Head for Safeguarding Adults in ABMU advised that this had commenced early and had in fact now been operating for nearly a year. In March this year the training would be further developed, and rolled out to all the organisations involved.

A Member referred to page 29 of the report, and the list of Strategic Priorities (ie No. 1) relating to Governance, and 1.2 Effective data collection and analysis. This was shown as amber under the RAG status, and that the timeline for completed actions to be made to turn this to green was March 2017. He asked if this date was realistically achievable.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager confirmed that some of the data and information to be collated would be in the form of Work Plans, work on which was currently ongoing. This was currently showing as amber as there were longer as well as short term projects, though it was hoped that all these would be completed by end March 2017.

Superintendent Jones added that there was also important work ongoing to reduce instances of anti-slavery and human trafficking problems, in order to improve these hopefully through reducing such cases.

The Chairperson enquired when Safeguarding Week was scheduled to be held, and how this was intended to be promoted.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager advised that this would be held on week commencing 13 November 2017, and that the event would be contributed to by the 3 local authorities and ABMU, which were the bodies involved in the Western Bay Project.

The Chairperson noted from the report, that the Children's Business Plan and the Adult's Business Plan were not in the same format.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that this was because these Boards were chaired by two different local authorities, though she would ensure that both these Business Plans were formatted in the same way for reasons of consistency.

The Chairperson referred to page 39 of the report, and the Western Bay Safeguarding Boards Quality & Performance Monitoring Management Group – Work Plan 2016/17. She asked when the milestones to achieve the work contained in the Plan would be completed by.

The Adult Safeguarding and Quality Manager confirmed that there had been a meeting regarding this issue last week, and that as a result of this, this section of the report would be populated with a date(s) for the completion of these milestones in the immediate future.

A Member referred to page 43 of the report, and pointed out that historically excellent work had been carried out within the County Borough, in respect of early intervention and prevention services. He was mindful however, that that as this was not a statutory service, grant funding for this may soon be coming to an end. He asked Invitees if they had been in consultation with Welsh Government with a view to looking at alternative avenues of funding, to continue support for this work.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help confirmed that no firm decision had been made as yet with regard to the above, though there was a distinct possibility that funding could be maintained for these services in the form of RSG as opposed to grant funding.

Superintendent Jones added that the Police could also offer support to help maintain these services.

The Head of Children's Social Care further added that this had been flagged up with the CSSIW, who were currently in the middle of a Social Services Inspection of services provided by BCBC with assistance from partners.

Members then made the following comments in respect of this item.

Western Bay Safeguarding

- 1 The Committee have requested to revisit this item at a future date and have asked to ensure that the report provides statistical data in relation to service demands and evidence how quickly and effectively the services are acting to those needs.
- 2 Members welcomed the wide range of agency representatives in attendance at the meeting, which provided a positive insight into the partnership working across the Safeguarding Boards, which the Committee felt was not necessarily portrayed within the report.
3. Members note that the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act prescribes the Membership of the Safeguarding Boards to include each Local Authority, but the Committee recommend that Elected Members should also be included in these meetings.
4. When discussing the Bridgend Operational Safeguarding Group, Members note that only Age Connects Morgannwg was listed on the Membership from the voluntary and charity sector and the Committee recommend that the group take the opportunity to extend the invitation to the wider 3rd Sector.
5. The Committee recommend that the Childrens Board Business Plan be consistent with the format of the Adults Board Business Plan to aid with the monitoring and assessment of their actions and outcomes.
6. The Committee commend the intervention and preventative functions of the Council and Members back the request made by Bridgend County Borough Council of Welsh Government to support these services by way of a Revenue Support Grant.
7. The Committee have requested to receive an update by way of a Member Briefing Session, to outline the findings of the commissioned investigation Operation Jasmine and what assurances and actions the local authority have provided as a result of this review.

Members requested the additional following information:

Members have asked to receive a copy of the report which was sent to Welsh Government in response to the Older People's Commissioner Report 'A Place to Call Home'.

76. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chairperson welcomed the Invitees to the meeting.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator introduced the report, the purpose of which, was to update Members on progress made in respect of the current 2016-2017 Domestic Abuse Strategy, and to highlight the proposed objectives and priorities for the strategy for 2017-2018, in alignment with the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV).

By way of background information, she advised that the 2015 Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2015, and consultation and the subsequent guidance on the various elements of the Act was ongoing.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report advised that the current strategy although entitled the 'VAWDASV' strategy (2017-2017) focussed on domestic abuse rather than the wider VAWDASV agenda, although it does seek to align the Authority with the VAWDASV Act. The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator added that the current Strategy (2016/17) had six principle areas of development, and these were listed in Table A in this section of the report, together with a position update as at the end of the third quarter of 2016/17.

She then explained that one of the next aims and objectives, was to ensure the smooth and effective roll-out of VAWDASV Act within the local authority and partners. The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator added that in conjunction with this, the next stages would be to develop a local training plan that will feed into a regional plan for those concerned to undertake, including within BCB schools in the form of training termed as Spectrum Project training.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator confirmed that also in terms of the next stages, the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017/18 was presently being drafted (Appendix 1 of the report refers), which would follow the format proposed by Welsh Government in accordance with VAWDASV. Welsh Government have proposed that a Strategy should follow the 6 objectives of the Act, and these were contained in paragraph 4.8.1 of the report.

The Chairperson noted that the Strategy primarily concentrated upon violence against women, and therefore, she asked if it also accounted for violence against men.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator advised that violence against women (by men) was by far more of a problem as opposed to the other way around, and was a consistent problem rather than a sporadic one. The Act under which the Strategy sits, whilst not precluding men, did concentrate upon women being the victims and this was a global and not just a national or local problem, that in some cases was serious and often prolonged abuse.

The Cabinet Member – Communities referred those present to page 76 of the Strategy, where it actually stated that women were far more likely than men to be killed by partners/ex-partners.

A Member referred to page 63 of the report and the Spectrum Project which was a national training programme funded by Welsh Government to raise awareness of domestic abuse and associated issues, that was being offered to all primary and secondary age children. She noted from this part of the report that a large proportion of secondary schools had taken up this training, but she queried if primary schools also had, and if teaching staff as well as pupils were also subject to having the training.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator advised that Bridgend were making good progress in terms of training compared to certain neighbouring authorities, and in terms of the take-up of this by primary schools, she advised that she would obtain this data and share it with Members outside of the meeting.

She was aware that training was progressing well in schools within the location of Maesteg, though there was some difficulty in getting schools on board as a lot of the training associated with domestic abuse was mandatory. The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator added that the training for schools was actually free until 2018, whereby thereafter there would be a cost attached to it. It was not known however, if funding would continue post 2018. She further added, that teachers would have an involvement in the various levels of groups of training.

The Cabinet Member Communities advised that there was a project ongoing in the Llynfi Valley known as the Spectrum Project and this was shared with Heads of schools in that area in order to advise of the training.

A Member asked if staff working for Social Enterprises, Trusts and other service providers acting on behalf of the Council would be trained, as well as Council staff per se.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator confirmed that she was not aware of the answer to this, or whether or not the training could be written into their Contracts if they weren't scheduled to receive it. She stated that she would obtain this information however, and once more share it with Members outside of the meeting.

A Member wished to make the point, that the Community Safety Partnership in Bridgend was very robust and proactive, with a positive focus on victims who had been the subject of any crime or anti-social behaviour. He asked however, if the Authority and the Police had looked at developing and enhancing 'perpetrator management.'

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator stated that without perpetrators there would be no victims, and a third sector grant had been secured to develop perpetrator programmes. Those considered in this category, were required to attend these programmes in order to have any access to children, ie in any disrupted family arrangement, due to parents for example splitting-up.

A Member was aware that there was the Assia Suite situated on the ground floor of the main Civic Offices, Bridgend, that catered for people who suffered from domestic abuse and noted that there had been some concern expressed with regard to security in this room to an extent, whereby it was considered that perhaps it should be made more secure.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator confirmed that there had been a couple of small incidents in this room that had given rise to concern, and that due to this consideration was being given to the entrance to the room being security operated to prevent easy access to this suite.

Domestic Abuse Strategy

- 1 Whilst Members understand that the 'Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy' encompasses any victim of domestic abuse, the Committee queried the title and were concerned of the possible stigma attached for a male victim subjected to violence and domestic abuse.

- 2 Members note the uptake of the training to raise awareness of domestic abuse at schools in the Llynfi area and recommend that other elected members use the same methodology as the Cabinet Member for Communities in approaching Headteachers at their Cluster Meetings and signposting the training.
- 3 The Committee queried the security measures in place at the Assia Suite based in the Civic Offices and Members recommend that the requested keypad access be provided as a priority.
- 4 Members conveyed their concerns over how the Authority will be able to ensure all objectives stipulated by Welsh Government - specifically the high quality resources as referred to in Objective 6, are delivered effectively with little or no investment from Welsh Government.
- 5 With reference to the training to be undertaken by all staff, the Committee queried whether this included the service providers working in association of the Authority i.e. Awen, Halo and Keir.

In addition Members requested the additional following information:

In relation to the Spectrum Project training to raise awareness of domestic abuse, Members asked to receive what percentage of primary schools in the County Borough that have taken up the training.

77. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 4.20 pm