

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Public Service Board Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Wednesday, 11th March, 2020 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor L. Dymock(Chairman)
County Councillors: D. Batrouni, L.Dymock,
R.Roden, F. Taylor, J.Treharne and T.Thomas

Officers in Attendance

Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and
Governance
Sharran Lloyd, LSB Development Manager
Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager

Also in Attendance:

Janice Dent, Regional Officer Gwent VAWDASV
Mary Ryan, Head of Corporate Safeguarding,
Newport City Council

APOLOGIES: County Councillor P. Pavia

1. To elect a Chair.

County Councillor L. Dymock was elected Chair for today's meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Public Open Forum.

No members of the public were present.

4. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse (VAWDASV)

Janice Dent, Regional Advisor for the Gwent VAWDASV team, and Mary Ryan, Corporate Safeguarding Lead for Newport City Council, presented their update report on delivering the regional VAWDASV strategy. This is an interim report, as the principal one comes at the end of the financial year. The Officers drew attention to funding, the structure of the Partnership Board, the 2018-23 strategy and delivery plan, progress to date, and wider responsibilities. The Home Office has been very impressed by the engagement with Monmouthshire for the DH-APR pilot project, which has led to the HO considering devolving governance of the review process to Welsh Government. The Regional team is working with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to see how communication can improve, and VAWDASV can be embedded fully into safeguarding procedures – this is one of the main focal points leading into the next financial year. A proposal has been submitted for capital funding, to increase refuge provision for Monmouthshire. Two open days will be held at the end of March to engage with citizens.

Challenge:

Could clearer information about the impacts and outcomes of the team's work be given?

The Needs Assessment is currently being updated. One of the key things about it this year is looking at progress between 2015 and now. This will include reports to Police, how many people have been supported, how many refuge spaces do we have, etc. That assessment is due to be completed at the end of the financial year, and will include the information requested. We are also awaiting the national indicators from Welsh Government, which is a suite of outcomes that each local authority will be required to report on. In addition, the regional Independent Domestic Violence Adviser has a reporting mechanism in terms of how many people have accessed the service; this data will tie in with the end-of-year report. We are working with Safer Monmouthshire to determine which specific measures and outcomes Monmouthshire would like to see. We are working on datasets and a benchmark to properly measure things moving forward.

Why do we not have Independent Domestic Violence Adviser data at this stage?

One of the reasons is timing, as we aren't at the end of the financial year yet. We are also identifying what Members would like to see – that is the basis for the Needs Assessment work, and the work with Safer Monmouthshire.

Is there no baseline on which we can work, while we await that data and information?

The Needs Assessment which was completed in 2015-16 is our benchmark. The Assessment currently being worked on will allow us to identify the difference between 2015-16 and now. This is renewed every three years. In terms of impact, we've worked to understand how people have felt about the service they've received, and consulted with frontline members and citizens. For example, it wasn't clear to people that the same services for women are available for men – consultations such as this are being fed into the Needs Assessment.

Is the strategy therefore not informed by data?

No, the strategy was informed by the Needs Assessment carried out in 2015-16, so with the updated Assessment we will be able to see what impact the strategy has had.

What about the '2021' plan?

This plan had to go to Welsh Government by February, in order to determine whether our funding would continue for another year with the caveat that this could change as a result of the Needs Assessment. It won't change radically because the strategic priorities will be the same, but might do around the specifics of the Gwent Needs action plan that's being developed by board members and STG members in April.

Can it be fed back that the timeline needs to change i.e. that we need the data to drive the strategy? The Needs Assessment could come before the strategy?

Yes.

Some of the wording in the plan makes it unclear how the outcomes could be tracked, and the relevant people held to account.

We can look again at the wording. Unfortunately, at the moment each group has its own action plan, which can lead to the overarching plan looking a little 'woolly'. This is something we're trying to change, moving into 2021.

Where are the measurements for how many victims we help in Monmouthshire, how many we re-house, etc.?

A report was written and submitted to Safer Monmouthshire recently which contains that information. It would give members more of an idea of the qualitative and quantitative data, and

further understanding of the Needs Assessment and the equality of which services we have across Gwent.

Do we have assurance that we have the right systems in place in Monmouthshire, over and above the individual strategies?

There is a national training framework that puts duties on all responsible bodies, in terms of mandatory training for everyone. It would probably be helpful for the committee to have the data on how Monmouthshire is doing in that regard too, particularly as it might demonstrate where a specific area is not achieving as expected.

On the matter of 'equality', what does this relate to specifically?

This relates to the availability of care and support across Gwent, rather than just in Monmouthshire. One of the reasons we look across the whole region is that the capital funding showed that we didn't have the specific provision within Monmouthshire for dispersed units, which is why we've gone down that project. We can certainly return to this committee to present further data once it is available. Often, someone seeking care or support might want to do so outside Monmouthshire, which is why we look across Gwent as a whole.

Concerning the pilot project of increasing awareness among young people, is it possible to increase the number of schools involved? Can the number of three be explained?

We worked with the Education Safeguarding leads on this particular project, which was only run for this year. We wrote to every safeguarding lead in Gwent asking for volunteers: only three schools took us up on that.

Is there involvement at primary level, or is that seen as too young?

The new curriculum will be helpful for that. Spectrum is also funded by Welsh Government to deliver training in primary schools. The pilot project has developed a suite of learning which we hope can be disseminated to as many schools as possible, including primary.

How can this committee be of help?

Working with members will be helpful in supporting us to roll out the pilot project.

We are about to embark on work in schools to tackle racism – Strong Communities and CYP could do some work around VAWDASV as well. Can more detail be given about how the Spectrum sessions work?

The sessions are tailored to each individual year group. It is supported by some other programs, such as Operation Encompass, which is rolled out across Gwent: when Police attend an incident at night or out of school hours, the school is notified prior to the child coming into school. This is a Gwent Police project, and involves the police linking directly with schools.

What is the regional team responsible for? What is its specific role?

The team's principal role is to support the activities of the board, to ensure it is meeting its requirements under the Act, and the guidance from Welsh Government as it continues to be updated. It is very much a guidance, advice and supporting role. Also a responsibility to appoint people to the right places, deliver the Needs Assessment, supply and explain data when it is requested, and generally give oversight.

While this is taking place, what happens to individuals who are experiencing problems?

The aforementioned is in addition to the regular daily duties of the services working together, specialist sector meetings to look at issues coming through and sharing best practice across organisations, looking at gaps in the services, etc. The national training framework is the key responsibility: making sure that anyone coming into contact with someone experiencing

VAWDASV gives the appropriate response. We report on how many people have been trained per local authority, working closely with each workforce development team. We have recently fed back that teachers are having difficulty accessing the training, so now it will be placed on Hwb. We are working with citizens to raise awareness; many male victims, for example, were not aware that they were in an abusive relationship. We have designed a brochure to that effect, which has gone out to Health Boards, community centres, etc.

What do you consider to be the major issues in Monmouthshire?

Our main priorities of work at this time are the following: refugee and migrant communities, dispersed units, covering the gap in which refuge can't be accessed by someone with teenage boys over 16 years old, work with young farmers (as rural communities are more isolated when it comes to talking to someone about an abusive relationship). We are working with Housing First to identify the number of people with domestic abuse as a marker – where are they going, where are the gaps, etc.

The labelling of 'Domestic Violence' implies it has to be a physical incident, when it can also include behavioural and financial control – which mechanism would account for that?

The legislation is clear that the correct term is 'Domestic Abuse'. We're working on a steering group around Iris for GPs, and the 'Ask and Act' training, working with Aneurin Bevan Health Board, as GPs are often the first point of contact for victims, and the best people to have conversations with them. We haven't reached every area of practice yet in our work; some of the plans for next year will be more wide reaching, to cover those other areas. There is a meeting next week with Connect Gwent and all service providers around referral pathways, particularly to streamline the responses for victims.

With funding coming to an end this month, is there funding for next year, and if not where will it come from?

The funding coming to an end is the Education Healthy Relationship funding, our funding is only annual from Welsh Government. The action plan in our report is the one that has gone to Welsh Government to hopefully receive funding for 2021. They have given an indicative agreement that we will have the funding, and we are now waiting for confirmation.

Is there still a requirement for a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, which the council used to have?

Would a central person or team not improve efficiency and efficacy?

The Act makes VAWDASV legislation more encompassing, so that the responsibility is shared across the whole Council. The important thing is for everyone to know the right pathway when presented with a problem or victim, and that that information is communicated as widely as possible. This is one of the roles of Safer Monmouthshire.

With a multidisciplinary approach, can matters can fall through the cracks if, for example, someone is on medical leave?

The 'Perpetrator Good Practice' for everyone in public service will hopefully help: we have the NTF Framework and 'Ask and Act', also Welsh Government is keen to look at Perpetrator Journeys, and where we can intervene earlier to identify unhealthy behaviours and attitudes before they become 'perpetrating.' There are a number of task groups looking at this.

Chair's Conclusion:

We would welcome the officers returning once the Needs Assessment has been published, and full data is available. It is hard to perform effective scrutiny at this stage without it. It would be useful for the committee to have the Spectrum report and Safer Monmouthshire report, as well

as Encompass and NTF information. It is agreed that we will need to know what the PSB will enact once they have the data, and monitor more closely what the outcomes for the public are expected to be, and the evidence trail involved. Working jointly with other committees would be useful; in particular, Healthy Relationships should go to Strong Communities and CYP, and the outcomes for victims to Adults Select.

5. Scrutiny of Regional Partnership Boards

Councillor Roden noted that currently there is inadequate scrutiny of the RPB and supports co-scrutinising it with other PSBs. Councillor Taylor noted that Adults Select Committee has discussed the Intermediate Care Fund; it would be helpful to set out for members how the funding allocation for Gwent is scrutinised, and how it comes in to the county and is distributed to the delivery bodies. It would be helpful to understand what function the 1% 'top-slicing' for management, co-ordination and oversight is playing, and what part Monmouthshire Council has in the oversight function.

Councillor Treharne requested that when joint scrutiny takes place, that further information be given on the funding breakdown, as well as the bullet points that the RPBS are required to provide (Population Needs Assessment, Area Plan, Annual Report, Integrated Market Position Statement, Established Pooled funds for Care Homes and family support members).

Scrutiny Manager Hazel Ilett noted that the Population Needs Assessment and Area plan have been scrutinised previously in other committees. Caerphilly Council has invited them to attend Caerphilly sessions to present information on the points just mentioned. In the meantime, while we wait to organise joint scrutiny, it would perhaps be worthwhile for those committees to come to Public Services to present that information.

6. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th July 2019.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th July 2019 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

7. To consider the Select Committee's forward work programme.

Given that Public Services is a new committee, there is an opportunity to look beyond simply scrutinising the work of the PSB. Different work streams have been considered, including scrutinising the RPBs and Shared Resource Service. There is also the opportunity to call in partners who receive public money, and the precept. Any services which are delivered jointly, which don't neatly fall into the remits of other Select Committees would merit being placed under this committee. Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and Governance, responded to the members' questions:

Regarding organisations in receipt of the precept – the Police and Crime Commissioner, for example – could clarification be given around this?

It doesn't give us more powers to scrutinise any partners than we currently have. In reshaping the committee it's that statement of intent, that a great deal of activity happens in the footprint of Monmouthshire, which currently is not effectively scrutinised by the elected politicians who are

tasked with representing the communities and people of Monmouthshire. Historically, we have not had the powers to scrutinise all public services, and we still don't. Nonetheless, there is a lot of collaborative activity that happens on this footprint, and there are a lot of issues raised with the Members as ward representatives where, potentially, further opportunities to scrutinise would be beneficial. The other aspect is that we're increasingly seeing activity undertaken collaboratively, and through different vehicles. We're expecting an announcement fairly soon about Corporate Joint Committees as part of the new Local Government Elections bill, which could see the emergence of new delivery vehicles for certain services. This committee gives us the opportunity to ensure that those don't fall through the cracks of the other committees.

Are there concrete examples of this collaboration, and of a positive impact being achieved as a result?

The original purpose of this committee was to hold the Public Services Board to account for its activity. The first phase of that work was focused on the processes and mechanisms of undertaking the wellbeing assessments: gathering the evidence, and producing the plan. One of the challenges for that has been that scrutiny has largely been on process because the challenges the PSB was looking at are those complex issues that don't necessarily have immediate short-term solutions. If we knew exactly how to solve them, we would already be doing them within our own organisation. It's too early to speak of impacts yet, but some of the work we're starting to see emerge are collaborative endeavours such as the joint work on the promotion of the agenda around VAWDASV. There's been involvement from Aneurin Bevan Health Board on the work of the Early Help panel, which is a multi-agency partnership and one of the PSB priorities. But in terms of outcomes, we're not going to see the impact of that for many years, if not generations. We're looking at long-term issues, and there are not many measurable outcomes yet that have come before this committee.

There's still a concern though that there is rhetoric involved with the PSB – it would be good to see some metrics at some point.

Yes, that is a fair challenge. The broader remit of this committee doesn't preclude it from identifying some of those areas within the wellbeing plan, and asking for reports and updates so that metrics can be seen, and officers (not just from Monmouthshire County Council) can be held to account. In the last 12-15 months, this committee has had presentations from the lead agencies for the six areas that the PSB has prioritised in its wellbeing plan. That work continues, so the committee can add any of those matters to its work programme at any point. The terms of reference have been revised and broadened because there were a lot of matters which the PSB legally discharges the duty for, which weren't coming to this committee. Today's topic of VAWDASV is one such example.

As an example of a topic for which the PSB has responsibilities, in terms of Future Generations, where does the Climate Emergency sit? And what about other pieces which are delivered in partnership?

The Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency (back in May 2019), and the resultant action plan which was devised, sits within the remit of the Strong Communities Select Committee. Given the increase in extreme weather impacts and desire from the public for action in the three years since the wellbeing plan was published, the PSB has asked officers to escalate its work; National Resources Wales have the lead on that. That work would therefore sit very well with this committee, as that's the collaborative activity.

8. **Date and time of next meeting: To be confirmed.**

The meeting ended at **11.39 am**