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Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 25.11.2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS, COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON MONDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)
County Councillors K W Curry, D O Evans, G Jones, I McIntosh and J Pugh

Officers: Gwilym Davies (Head of Property, Planning, and Public Protection), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), Clive Jones (Professional Lead - Trading Standards, Community Safety and Emergency Planning) and Fay Smith (Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors L. George, J. Gibson-Watt, P. Pritchard, D. Selby, M. Barnes and from County Councillor J. Evans (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Regulatory Services)

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Committee noted that an apology from County Councillor K. Curry had not been included in the minutes of the previous meeting.

Subject to the addition of Councillor Curry's apology, the Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 October, 2019 as a correct record.

3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS

There were no declaration of party whips in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest from Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER

The Committee received the report of the Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator. (Copy filed with signed minutes)

The Safer Communities Programme – The Welsh Government's Programme had been established in 2017 which was a vision for community safety in Wales and was supported by six key principles and 11 commitments. The programme was being taken forward by a multi-agency programme board with a number of workstreams. However little had come out of the programme to date which directly affected the Community Safety Partnership.

Commission for Justice in Wales Report – This was essentially about the devolution of criminal justice from Westminster to Welsh Government which was published in October 2019.

Question / Comment: Cautions for youngsters which was raised with the Police and Crime Commissioner previously – are there any changes proposed to reduce the number issued?

Response: These reports are more about strategic issues. The changes to the criminal justice system are very aspirational.

Question / Comment: Is there a way the Committee can make representations regarding cautions?

Response: The Committee was reminded that the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner would be held in 2020, so it was uncertain what could be achieved prior to that. The Community Safety Co-ordinator suggested that she and the Member prepared a submission to send to the Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration.

Question / Comment: The Council needs to promote a safe cycling campaign, similar to the “Be Seen” scheme, so that cyclists are visible and have correct lighting on bikes.

Response: All the Council can do is to advise and educate the public, as it cannot force individuals to comply.

Question / Comment: Why cannot the Council reuse the “Be Seen” campaign? What about Council staff? Could there not be a communications campaign for staff that cycle to work

Question / Comment: With the issue of substance misuse in schools, is there more the Council can do to deter people?

Response: Crime and disorder is not devolved in Wales, and action on substance misuse is dealt with as a public health issue. The Council has commissioned two organisations to deal with substance misuse (Kaleidoscope for Adults and Cais for Young People). Cais do go into schools along with Police schools liaison officers. The Community Safety Partnership is doing as much as it can in relation to preventative work. More work has also been going on especially due to “county lines”. The Partnership will consider doing more where there is a specific action that it can undertake.

Question / Comment: With regard to “county lines” and the Home Office’s Serious Crime Strategy, how effective is this?

Response: The strategy was launched this year. There is a regional group responsible for the strategy which is a multi agency group, and in addition there are local groups in the county. There are seven serious organised crime groups operating in Powys, but these are low level groups, as groups supplying drugs in Powys have been the subject of action by the police. Police action has also changed since Operation Regent with earlier action being taken. The success of Operation Regent was that the Police took a tactical approach which involved close liaison with other groups and agencies such as the Council. Serious crime is also not just relating to drugs but also about rogue traders

where Trading Standards would be involved e.g. sale of tobacco.

Question / Comment: Is the public health approach in Wales the right approach to dealing with serious organised crime relating to substance misuse? Is there evidence this is working?

Response: Public health is part of the approach but the economy also plays an important part as serious organised crime has an impact on the stability of communities. Travelling crime does have an impact on Powys. An internal audit review of enforcement action relating to serious organised crime is ongoing which is the responsibility of all enforcement teams in the Council.

Question / Comment: As today is White Ribbon day, what is being done to reduce offending?

Response: There is currently a lack of analytical capability to analyse data from agencies at present. The figures for violence against the person come from the police and it is difficult to drill down into this data. There are also no trends in relation to violence against the person, although the figure is increasing. In relation to domestic abuse and VAWDASV, there is a group operating under the Safeguarding Board which links to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). However the CSP only has a part role to play in VAWDASV with other groups undertaking the remaining work.

Question / Comment: How does the Council fill in the gap in analytical analysis?

Response: This is a matter being pursued by the Police and Crime Commissioner in consultation with Welsh Government.

Question / Comment: The Probation Service is being reunified on Monday. What opportunities will come from this?

Response: The National Probation Service has always been engaged with the Community Safety Partnership. The Wales Community Rehabilitation Company has not been so engaged due to the level of offenders that they were dealing with. The reunification of the service was believed to be a positive move forward.

Question / Comment: Smart Water – is this still used? Are there still records available and does the police have access to these and use them to trace items which have been stolen?

Response: Yes smart water is still operational. A bid has been made to provide smart water to protect quad bikes under the rural crime initiative. However its use is not being promoted as much as it used to be. The police have access to ultra violet lights which is used with smart water but again it is not certain how much these are used. Whilst there are cheaper versions of smart water available on the internet, the Council could only promote the use of “smarter by design” products. It would be possible to speak to the police about how many instances of smart water recognition were used as part of prosecutions.

Question / Comment: ANPR (Automated Number Plate Recognition) Cameras – is there data on how successful these have been in terms of dealing with serious organised crime and car theft?

Response: This information is not known for general crime but would be known for serious organised crime which falls within the remit of the Community Safety Partnership. Under Crime and Disorder, ANPR cameras are accessible to other enforcement agencies such as Trading Standards when dealing with travelling criminality or individuals of interest.

Question / Comment: Quad bikes and trackers. There is an increased theft of quad bikes. However there is no difference in levels of insurance premiums whether the vehicle is fitted with a tracker or not. Can the Council work with insurance companies or others to encourage owners to buy and fit trackers.

Response: This will be raised with the rural crime group which includes representatives of farming unions to encourage owners to buy trackers.

Question / Comment: Can the Council encourage the use of trackers for other types of machinery / equipment on farms?

Response: Yes. The theft of quad bikes and farm machinery as well as livestock worrying and theft have seen increases in numbers recently and have been the subject of police action.

Outcomes:

- (i) **That the Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator and Cllr J. Pugh prepare a submission to the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding reducing the number of cautions being handed out to young people.**
- (ii) **That the Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator raise the promotion of the use of trackers on farm vehicles and equipment as well as the issue of insurance levels for quad bikes with / without trackers with the rural crime group**

6. PROSECUTION ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Committee received the draft Prosecution Enforcement Policy for pre-Cabinet Scrutiny. (Copy filed with signed minutes)

This was an update to the policy which provided the framework for enforcement to ensure that the Council is fair and proportionate in its enforcement activity. It was confirmed that the policy would meet the National Enforcement Priorities for Wales, the Principles of Good Regulation and the golden rules for guidance on Regulation.

In addition, a separate policy on proceeds of crime has been included within the policy framework which is a standard policy used across the UK. The principles of enforcement is bringing people to compliance, making people trade well and stopping serious breaches.

Question / Comment: Whilst prosecutions are taken in the public interest, are they also based on cost effectiveness?

Response: The Council is under a duty to enforce legislation. The policy covers evidence and whether a case can be won. Operation Gleam was a landmark case and Powys have secured proceeds of crime monies of around £180k. However the Council does not just prosecute cases where it

can secure such monies, but it is about taking out criminal gangs and the money they have gained illegally.

Question / Comment: Is the Council spending excessive amounts of money on prosecutions?

Response: The Council has no choice but to pursue prosecutions in order to stop criminality. It also has to assess the level of criminality and there may be funding sources to assist the Council to undertake prosecutions and in other cases the Council may hand the case to others to take forward.

Question / Comment: Powys should not be footing the bill for large cases and we should seek to be working with partners.

Response: The Council does seek to use partners where possible.

Outcomes:

The Committee had no comment to make on the draft policy.

7. FOOD JUSTICE

The Committee noted the Motion which had been considered by the Council at its meeting on 11 July, 2019. The Committee was asked how to take the motion forward.

It was suggested that work would need to be undertaken to assess the extent of the issue in Powys and would need to involve partners in the third sector, food banks and community groups. The Working Group established to consider this issue should involve County Councillor Joy Jones who had been appointed by Full Council to be the lead member to deliver food justice in view of her role as Poverty Champion.

Outcomes:

- (i) That a Working Group be established comprising County Councillor M. Dorrance, J. Jones and 3 other Members to assess the scale of the food poverty issue in Powys.**
- (ii) That the Committee and non-scrutiny Members be canvassed for expressions of interest to join the Working Group.**

8. WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee noted that there were no reports from Working Groups for consideration.

9. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a copy of the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme. (Copy filed with signed Minutes)

HOWPS Working Group – the Committee noted that the information required for consideration by the Working Group was delayed. The Chair agreed to raise this with the Corporate Director, Environment and Economy.

Y Gaer – The Committee expressed concern that the revised business case had not been considered by scrutiny prior to the agreement being completed. An updated position would be sought from the Head of Service.

Car Parking Charges Working Group – the Scrutiny Manager reported that information has been sought. Councillor I McIntosh who raised the issue originally agreed to contact the Head of Service to pursue this matter.

Outcomes:

- (i) HOWPS Working Group - Chair to raise this with the Corporate Director, Environment and Economy**
- (ii) Y Gaer - An updated position to be sought from the Head of Service**
- (iii) Car Parking Charges Working Group - Councillor I McIntosh to contact the Head of Service regarding the provision of information.**

County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)