

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15TH APRIL, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 G.A. Davies
 J. Hill
 J. Holt
 C. Meredith
 J. Millard
 M. Moore
 J.C. Morgan
 G. Paulsen
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope

WITH: Service Manager: Policy and Partnerships
 Alison Palmer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer GAVO
 Kathryn Cross, Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks
 David Arnold, Policy Officer (PSB)
 Scrutiny and Democratic Officer/Adviser

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence reported.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor M. Moore and Councillor G. Paulsen declared an interest in item 6 - Age-friendly Communities Programme - Progress update.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th February, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 25TH FEBRUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Action Sheet from the meeting held on 25th February, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE</u></p> <p>Councillors M. Moore and G. Paulsen declared an interest in the following item and remained in the meeting.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive Officer, GAVO.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive Officer GAVO advised that the report presented a progress update regarding the PSB's Age-Friendly Communities programme and highlighted the work being undertaken with the Council's Engagement Team to develop this programme. She reported that there had been delays due to the impact of Covid on communities, however, work was now starting to progress. A Steering Group was now operating and the Community Development Manager from GAVO was supporting the 50+ Forum to revise and strengthen their governance documents. A third sector Engagement Officer from GAVO had been</p>	

appointed shared between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly County Borough Councils to provide additional staffing to support the work moving forward.

A Member commented that the one positive aspect from Covid was that it had brought communities together to support each other. Tenants and residents in Tredegar and other areas had been helping to deliver food parcels in conjunction with Social Services and had established links with hard to reach groups such as the elderly and most vulnerable people and he hoped these links would continue post-Covid. The Deputy CEO agreed there had been a magnificent response from the community right across the county. There had been a wider range of age groups supporting the community, and the organisation were considering some intergenerational work with those younger people that had experienced volunteering, perhaps for the first time on a community level, to retain that volunteering role to continue that community spirit. She felt this would support the age friendly communities work and the understanding between generations.

The Policy Officer commented that all the information gathered through the community groups providing services in response to the pandemic, the Council's locality response teams, the volunteers they work with and the Integrated Wellbeing Networks programme, could be brought together and built into the Age-friendly Communities programme.

A Member referred to paragraph 2.4 virtual events and activities, the Deputy CEO said that in order to retain some virtual activities there would need to be a blended approach, for instance if support could be provided to those people who were housebound to learn new technologies this would widen their opportunities to be involved. Community centres were not fully open as there were still restrictions in place and as such there was a need to look at different ways to provide services whilst recognising there were individuals who still did not have links to digital technologies.

A Member referred to CHAD a disabilities group who refurbish computers bespoke to the individual's disability. The Deputy CEO was aware of this group and other similar groups such as Digital Cymru, the Wales Co-op initiative who loan out equipment and other initiatives whereby tablets and laptops were provided to Care Homes for residents to communicate with their families and would look at how to build on these initiatives in the near future.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.

No. 7

BLAENAU GWENT PARTICIPATORY BUDGET PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy & Partnerships.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships advised that the report provided an update on progress achieved towards a Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budget programme overseen by the Public Services Board. In relation to the Participatory Budget £100,000 had been identified to take this process forward in 2021/22, and he informed Members that further funding could be available during this financial year.

In response to a Member's question regarding the use of consultants, the Service Manager said that additional funding had been requested from partner organisations to reduce the amount of money spent on a consultancy approach. Discussions had been held with the Participatory Budget (PB) Steering Group on the most suitable approach to take forward and they had recommended that the services of a consultant who specialised in delivering virtual Participatory Budget programmes be employed to oversee delivery of the programme. This would ensure that the Participatory Budget was effectively operated with appropriate advice and guidance and the community provided with the best opportunity to take forward grant arrangements. The Member felt it would be more appropriate to refer to consultants as specialist contractors in relation to the Participatory Budget programme.

A Member raised concerns regarding future increases to specialist contractor's fees and also stressed the need for a wide range of people from the community to participate on the PB Steering Group to ensure greater coverage of skills and suggested the Council's Citizen's Panel could be invited to participate as part of this programme. The Service Manager reassured Members that a capped fee arrangement had been put in place regarding the specialist contractor's fees to ensure value for money. In relation to the community involvement in setting out the Steering arrangements, he again reassured Members that the intention was

to ensure that all communities were actively involved to represent the public and to ensure that it is an effective process. He felt that with the involvement of the specialist contractor, they would have the experience to reach the right people and advise on what had worked well in other areas. He would take the Members comments on board as part of the Steering process.

A Member enquired regarding the actual cost of the specialist contractor and other partner's contribution towards that cost. The Service Manager said from the £100,000, 10% could be deemed for administrative fees. Feedback from a specific specialist contractor was that the fee could potentially be £14,000 to £18,000, depending on the number of events held. This had been reported back to the Public Services Board to identify additional funding beyond this grant to support that process, and a number of Public Services Board partners had identified additional funding to support their arrangement, although there was no specific figure at this stage. From a scrutiny perspective there would be clarity on the actual spend and this would be monitored by the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee and reported to the Public Services Board in accordance with monitoring arrangements outlined in the report.

He advised that the Steering Group would set the arrangements around what could be bid for and felt this was a good opportunity for elected Members to get messages out to community groups and organisations to take part in this opportunity. He added that as this was a community based project all elected Members would be kept up to date on progress and key information on how to be actively involved. He felt the use of a specialist contractor was a real opportunity to ensure this was a success in Blaenau Gwent.

A Member commented that the use of a specialist contractor in this instance was money well spent as a number of community groups and organisations would be looking to apply for money and the process needed to be open and transparent. The Service Manager pointed out that the specialist contractor was a very successful company in ensuring that the participatory budgeting processes across the UK were implemented effectively and provided the maximum benefits in the community.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report as provided prior to it

being submitted to the Public Services Board.

No. 8

GWENT REGIONAL WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy & Partnerships.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships gave an overview of the report and advised that the report was provided to outline the statutory requirements for consultation on the assessment of local well-being and highlighted options for how the Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Committee can fulfil their role as a statutory consultee.

In relation to the regional grant funding from the Welsh Government, the Chair enquired when the outcome of the application would be known. The Service Manager advised there was £78,000 available for the region, the application that had been submitted was fully compliant with the terms and conditions as set out in the criteria and hoped to be informed of the outcome imminently.

A Member commented that this was a large piece of work that needed to encompass hard to reach groups in the community such as the elderly, the most isolated, the disabled and young people especially Comprehensive age pupils and College students, who had had a difficult and challenging year, especially with examinations due to the pandemic. Most schools now had a dedicated Well-being Teacher or Tutor and Link Governor in place to support youngsters and he felt the report should specifically reflect youngster's views.

The Service Manager clarified that this was a population based Well-being Assessment and encompassed all of our communities and would consider the different parts of the community to look at the differences and consequences and take this forward via the pillars of Well-being which were economic, social, environmental and cultural. Children and young people would have a big impact across these areas specifically from an education perspective and linking in with schools. He pointed out that one of the principles in para 6.1 read 'Consider well-being in Gwent in light of changing contextual circumstances and understand the implications of emerging challenges (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, green recovery, EU Transition). He reassured Members that all areas of well-being

would be investigated and would ensure links with schools through the Well-being Champions was progressed through the Engagement Team and Sub Groups. There had been a lot of progress in relation to well-being in schools and the new curriculum looked to place a strong focus on well-being, he was aware that Blaenau Gwent pupils had, in the past, participated in national well-being surveys and he would look out for that intelligence and data to investigate the issues raised.

A Member referred to old age pensioners and senior citizens and stressed they had no community connect at all during the pandemic and felt that every effort should be made to include this group of people. The Service Manager said that Members had identified two very important groups of populations and, as a whole population approach there was a requirement to look across the borough at all groups. He added that work was also being carried out around Community Impact Assessments in both of these areas at a Local Authority level and also with partners, he gave an example regarding the earlier paper which considered the Age-friendly community. The team were working closely with partners regarding understanding the impact of COVID-19 and other issues on specific populations and all that information would be tied into the Well-being Assessment process and allow the partnership to focus on specific issues around the Assessment of Well-being moving forward. He added that the team would be actively looking to ensure that the appropriate links were made.

A Member requested clarification on the way this group would be set up and who would be responsible for producing the final report. The Service Manager clarified that the Public Services Board would be responsible for putting a Well-being Assessment in place. However, the PSB was made up of statutory partners so in essence it was the statutory partners responsibility to ensure this was delivered. He explained that a current project plan was being developed to ensure that the four pillars of Well-being i.e. economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects were fully analysed, considered and taken forward. Subject to agreement, there would be one document, an Assessment of Well-being, put in place for Gwent and that document would be presented for scrutiny to the appropriate committee for consideration. He reassured Members that Blaenau Gwent would be involved in all the key areas to ensure that comments from key groups were taken into consideration.

The Service Manager commented that this was the first time a Regional Well-being Assessment was being developed and said that discussions around the differences between the five local authority areas had been considered. It had been recognised that any Gwent Well-being approach needed to have a consistent way of considering the region as a whole. The current arrangements for the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan looked at the four Well-being areas in the borough, and negotiations were being held for those geographical areas to remain as they are. The report would consider geographical analysis from all five local authorities to look for differences and to ensure that any differences are highlighted and carried forward as part of that planning process.

A brief discussion ensued and upon a vote being taken;

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee considered the report and provided the following specific comment for consideration by the Public Services Board before approval;

- That a consistent approach to engagement be delivered with an emphasis on hard to reach groups, including youngsters and pupils from comprehensive schools and colleges and older people groups.

The Committee FURTHER AGREED to receive a further report on the movement to a regional PSB as part of the forward work programme.

No. 9

INTEGRATED WELL-BEING NETWORK FOR BLAENAU GWENT

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Director of Public Health, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks.

The Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks advised that the report provided an update on the progress made against implementation of the regional Integrated Well-being Network transformation programme in Blaenau Gwent. She informed Members that Covid had impacted greatly on this initiative and therefore had to deviate from the original objectives. In relation to health and well-being, efforts had been realigned with the

community to support accessing services across the borough to maintain positive well-being at home during lockdown periods.

A Member commented that Tredegar town centre was now a free wi-fi centre as funding had been secured for the next three years and felt it was important to make the community aware of this. The Service Lead agreed to advertise the free wi-fi in Tredegar town centre through network groups.

In response to a Member's question regarding access to befriending services, the Service Lead advised that this was a specific befriending service, pre-Covid befriending was identified as a key priority. A voluntary organisation in Abergavenny had wanted to expand their befriending service into the Brynmawr area and after consultation, some befrienders had been recruited, pre-Covid, to that befriending service and as Covid developed the befriending service was rolled out to the whole of Blaenau Gwent and further. Currently the voluntary organisation was at full capacity but had secured additional funding to be able to increase capacity across Blaenau Gwent.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.
