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## SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### 13.09.12

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**Present:**

**Councillor Peter Read - Vice-chairman**

Councillors: Huw Edwards, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Siôn Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Wyn Williams, R. Hefin Williams.

**Co-opted Members with a vote on education issues only:** The Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor R H Wyn Williams (Care)

**Officers:** Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Alan Jones Evans, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mrs Rita Price (The Catholic Church), Mrs Rhian Roberts (Dwyfor Parent Governors' Representative).

#### 1. YSGOL Y GROESLON

A member expressed his concern that an officer from the Education Department was not present to provide an update for the Scrutiny Committee regarding the condition of Ysgol y Groeslon considering the reports that had appeared in the press recently regarding parents' concerns.

It was explained that it was not a specific item on the agenda and the Member's concern would be referred to the Education Department.

#### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Elin Walker Jones declared a personal interest in Item 5 – Change in Health Care in North Wales, as she was employed by the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. She was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the Chamber during the discussion on the item.

#### 3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 31 July 2012 as a true record.

#### 4. CHANGE IN HEALTH CARE IN NORTH WALES

(a) The Vice-chairman explained that as a result of the presentation given to all Members of the Council this morning by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, the aim of this committee was to consider a response to the public consultation and specifically to the proposals that had been submitted regarding changes in health care in north Wales.

(b) Before proceeding to the main item, a Member expressed dissatisfaction and concern regarding the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's language policy. It was noted that there was only one bilingual officer of all the officers present at the presentation and it was strongly felt that the leadership of the Health Board should be bilingual. An appeal was made for members to speak Welsh in any future meetings and for non-Welsh speakers to use the translation facilities.

(c) The Corporate Director (DPL) summarised the proposals that were part of the Health Board's consultation and he encouraged the Committee to draw up recommendations to be included as the Council's opinion of the consultation. It was noted that the proposals referred to four headings:

- Specialist services, namely neo-natal intensive care and vascular surgery
- Mental Health of Older People
- Community Services
- Community Hospitals

In terms of **neo-natal intensive care services**, it was proposed to retain the special care and high-dependency units for babies in the three existing Hospitals and provide intensive care services at Arrowe Park Hospital. Whilst accepting that a service was available in Ysbyty Bodelwyddan, it was not possible to provide 24 hour care because of the lack of staff resources to provide a specialist service there.

(ch) In response to the above proposal, the Scrutiny Committee was of the opinion that a request should be made to invite a specialist from the Care Unit, Ysbyty Bodelwyddan, to this Scrutiny Committee to receive clarity on the effect of moving the Care Unit before making any recommendation on the proposal.

(d) With regard to **vascular surgery** currently being provided at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Wrecsam Maelor, which was a very complex and specialist surgery, it was proposed to move the service to one centre but no decision had been made on a specific centre.

(dd) With regard to **older people services**, and specifically those individuals suffering from dementia, it was proposed to strengthen community teams and to move from a hospital based service to provide more support in the community. This would be crucial in early identification of individuals suffering from dementia so that treatment could be commenced appropriately and consequently reduce deterioration over time. The effect of this at grass roots level in Gwynedd was explained, namely, not to reopen the wards in Ysbyty Bryn Beryl and the Meirion Unit, Dolgellau, which had already been closed. Also, it was proposed to reduce the beds in Ysbyty Cefni and move them to Ysbyty Gwynedd.

(e) In response to the above proposal, the following points were highlighted by individual members:

- (i) there was a need to provide continuous local respite care in the Wards of Ysbyty Bryn Beryl and Meirion Unit, as there was enormous pressure on families who had to travel to visit patients.
- (ii) extended families no longer existed these days as young people had moved away to seek employment.
- (iii) no care provision existed in Meirionnydd and grave concern was expressed regarding which provision would be available bearing in mind also that the Council was closing homes for the elderly and making cuts to day care provision.
- (iv) Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board continued to discuss establishing extra care housing for the Blaenau Ffestiniog area but this was impractical because of the unsuitability of houses to receive specialist equipment such as hoists etc. Concern was expressed of the lack of communication regarding this by the Health Board.

(f) In terms of Community Care, it was proposed to extend a model that had been trialled in Denbigh, based on the principle of extending care in the community by providing more support for people to live until the end of their lives in their own homes. Extending this model across the north would tie-in with the arrangements of areas, namely, Meirion / Arfon / Dwyfor and would offer teams across agencies an opportunity to meet and coordinate care, especially for patients with the most acute needs in those areas.

(ff) With regard to **Community Hospitals**, a model was proposed of three central hospitals, namely Ysbyty Gwynedd, Ysbyty Alltwen and Ysbyty Dolgellau, with the aim of rationalising locations and providing assurance that there would be more services in the three hubs, such as:

- Moving the x-ray provision from Ysbyty Bryn Beryl, Ysbyty Tywyn and Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog to the above hubs and the provision would be available from 9.00am -5.00pm (five days a week)
- In terms of the minor injuries service, more permanent hours were proposed in the hubs from 8.00am – 8.00pm (seven days a week) and reducing the hours in Ysbyty Tywyn and Ysbyty Bryn Beryl. It was proposed to close the minor injuries unit in Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog and the logic for this was to offer a more consistent and dependable service compared with the current arrangements which offered an occasional service.

With regard to Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog, it was proposed to move beds to Ysbyty Alltwen or to provide more care at home.

(g) It was noted that there was very strong objection amongst Members, who had attended the presentation earlier today, to the above proposals, especially the service for patients suffering from dementia and the closure of the Minor Injuries Unit in Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog. It was emphasised that Blaenau Ffestiniog was a deprived town and concern was expressed regarding health inequality by the loss of a service in the hospital, and should an emergency arise, the nearest hospital would be approximately 14 miles away and the current Hospital served *ysgolion meithrin* and the primary and secondary school.

(ng) The following points were added by individual Members as a basis for supporting the objections:

- (i) the Minor Injuries Unit was closing in Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog because nurses were not receiving sufficient practice but yet it is understood that the same nurses would deal with the work in Ysbyty Alltwen.

- (ii) The responses of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board had been very disappointing to the questions posed to them.
- (iii) Whilst accepting that extending care in the community worked successfully in an urban area, from the perspective of Gwynedd, the Health Board had not taken into consideration transport and the condition of the roads in some rural areas of Gwynedd; tight schedules to be completed by community nurses; parking problems near patients' houses; the busy period during the tourist season in the area.
- (iv) Problems involving Public transport / travelling for patients /families / carers in a rural area especially from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Ysbyty Alltwen and / or Ysbyty Gwynedd.
- (v) How long would patients have to wait for emergency services and how far would ambulances have to travel should an emergency arise in the rural areas of south Gwynedd?
- (vi) Concern regarding out-of-hours service in Dolgellau. It was understood that north Powys had been funding the service to the sum of £200,000 and this would be a reduction for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board but no positive response had been received regarding this.
- (vii) Concern regarding other services such as other clinics moving as a consequence of moving the x-ray service and it was questioned whether as a result it would gradually undermine the viability of community hospitals.
- (viii) Financial implications for the Council and specifically for Social Services in supporting the people that would receive home care.
- (ix) It was noted in the consultation document that it was proposed to invest approximately £4m in redeveloping the current facilities in Blaenau Ffestiniog conditional on developing a business plan. It was questioned whether there was assurance of the investment but the Health Board could not provide a positive response until they were certain of the result of the consultation.
- (x) The cost of providing a care service would be enormous compared with the cost of keeping Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog open. Should the hospital be closed, it would mean the loss of one doctor along with surgeries in Llan Ffestiniog and perhaps Dolwyddelan.

**Resolved: To request the Cabinet Member (Care) to convey the following to the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board:**

- (i) complete opposition by this Scrutiny Committee to the closure of Ysbyty Blaenau Ffestiniog as it is totally unreasonable to do so because of the size of the population of the town of approximately 5,000 people.**
- (ii) this Scrutiny Committee's wish to invite a specialist from the Care Unit, Ysbyty Bodelwyddan, to a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to receive clarity on the effect of moving the Care Unit prior to making any final recommendations on the proposals of the Health Board.**
- (iii) the committee's wish to invite a GP to a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to outline the effect of the proposals in the consultation document at grass-roots level.**

## **5. EDUCATION STRATEGY**

**Submitted:** A report by the Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager, outlining the options for Members regarding establishing a Working Group to assist the Cabinet Member to implement the work programme for the reorganisation of the County's schools.

- (a) The Democratic Services Manager referred to the options and noted that a draft work programme for the reorganisation of schools had already commenced and had been discussed by the Cabinet informally and the option of establishing a Working Group to assist the Cabinet Member was no longer relevant. Therefore, it was recommended that the Scrutiny Committee should receive timely progress reports in accordance with the Cabinet's work programme.
- (b) A Member noted that this was totally unacceptable from the Cabinet considering that it was aware of the wishes of this Scrutiny Committee regarding voicing its opinion and to represent the interests of its electors. It was suggested that this should be totally opposed and a clear message should be sent to the Cabinet Member (Education) that this Scrutiny Committee wished to be part of the process of implementing the work programme for the reorganisation of the county's schools and not to be part of an ad hoc monitoring process.
- (c) Another Member endorsed the above and added that there was a need to examine the scrutiny process in general to find what the best contribution back-benchers could make and members should not be attacking each other. He was also concerned that the remit of the Services Scrutiny Committee was too broad for one Committee considering that education and health were important issues for Gwynedd residents.
- (ch) Establishing Working Groups would be a good idea that would lead to expertise but it was questioned whether there was an opportunity for those Members who were not part of the Working Group to provide an input in the discussions.
- (d) In response to the above, the Democratic Services Manager explained that the reports of the Working Groups would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee prior to determining recommendations which would be submitted to the Cabinet Member.

**Resolved: To refuse the recommendation as outlined in the report before the committee and to request that the Democratic Services Manager conveys to the Cabinet Member this Scrutiny Committee's wish to be part of the process of implementing the work programme for the reorganisation of the county's schools and not to be part of an ad hoc monitoring process.**

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.10 pm.