

EXECUTIVE
30 MARCH 2010

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 30 March, 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor L.A. Sharps (Vice-Chair Chairman)

Councillors: H. D. Hutchinson, N. M. Matthews, N. Phillips and H. Yale

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: J. B. Attridge, V. Gay, R.G. Hampson, P.G. Heesom, D.L. Mackie and C.A. Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of Housing, Head of ICT and Customer Services and Committee Officer

302. CHANGE TO THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported that the Chairman had agreed to the submission of an additional item. A report had been referred to the Executive from the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 March, 2010 in respect of a report on Letting Charges – Youth Centres which required consideration by the Executive.

303. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 9 March 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

304. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N. Phillips declared an interest in agenda item number 16 being a report of the Director of Community Services on the Neighbourhood Housing Team Restructure. He also indicated that he would be leaving the meeting during the consideration of this item.

305. FLINTSHIRE FUTURES PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive presented an outline of the developing Flintshire Futures Programme, designed to manage the impacts of reducing public sector finance, for information and broad endorsement.

The Chief Executive stressed the significant reductions in available revenue and capital resources from central government over the medium term to longer term. The financial context was extremely challenging. The forecast at the extreme end of the scale showed a reduction of 20% in revenue budgets over a seven year period and a reduction in the availability of capital of up to 50%.

The Flintshire Futures programme had two proposed parts. Firstly, the Change programme and secondly the Choice Programme. Efficiency was a dominant principle in the Change Programme with collaboration and alternative methods of service delivery dominant in the Choice Programme.

The Chief Executive explained that the combined efficiencies of the Change and Choice Programmes would aim to bridge the funding 'gap' to a significant extent. Any remaining 'gap' would have to be bridged by reductions in services against a set of politically supported priorities.

RESOLVED

That the outline of the developing Flintshire Futures Programme, designed to manage the impacts of reducing public sector finance, be noted and endorsed.

306. DRAFT YOUTH SERVICE STRATEGY

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report on the latest version of the Draft Youth Service Strategy, which had been amended as a result of consultation feedback.

The Draft Strategy had been subject to a consultation period which closed on 31st January, 2010. It had also been considered at two meetings of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Responses to the consultation document had been incorporated into the Draft Strategy.

The Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the Vision Statement which was enclosed in the Draft Strategy and informed Members that it had been written by a young person from Flintshire to better reflect the expectations of young people.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the post-consultation version of the Draft Youth Service Strategy be approved.
- (b) That the commissioning of additional work on models of service design be supported.

307. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Director of Lifelong Learning presented a report which provided an update on the implementation of the School Effectiveness Framework in Flintshire.

The School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) was the overarching policy framework that sought to transform educational standards and provision in the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), local authorities and schools over the

next decade. The Director of Lifelong Learning highlighted the SEF aims and how they would be achieved, as outlined within the report.

The Director of Lifelong Learning concluded that the local authority had retained a high quality school effectiveness team, which included secondees with recent and relevant experience of school leadership. Lessons learned from the pilot work would be applied to regional and national school improvement planning.

RESOLVED

That the involvement of the County Council in this project be supported and noted.

308. CORPORATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

The Chief Executive presented a report which outlined the approach taken to develop the Corporate Business Continuity Plan.

The Business Continuity Management (BCM) was a discipline and process to manage risks to the smooth running of an organisation or delivery of service, ensuring continuity of “mission critical services” in the event of a disruption and effective, timely recovery afterwards.

The Chief Executive reported that all twenty three “mission critical services” had submitted their Business Continuity plans, which had enabled the development of the Corporate Business Continuity Plan. The Plan had been developed using “industry standard” models and refined to reflect the Council’s own approach to disruption, for example, the arrangements for dealing with (and recovering from) the recent severe weather. A testing programme would be put in place to ensure the Plan was robust.

RESOLVED

That the approach taken to develop the Corporate Business Continuity Plan be endorsed.

309. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2009/10 (MONTH 10)

The Head of Finance presented the most up to date revenue budget monitoring information (Month 10) for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account in 2009/10. Section 2.00 of the report set out the projected position. The Head of Finance advised Executive that the same information had been reported to the Corporate Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th March, 2010.

The report noted the overall movement in the General Fund between month 9 and month 10 which showed an increased overspend of £0.259M which was mainly due to an increase in the overspend on Lifelong Learning and a reduction in the underspend on Central and Corporate. Section 3.05 of

the report outlined the programme of efficiencies, which detailed efficiencies which either had been achieved or were projected to be achieved in 2009/10.

The report also noted details of the movement to date on unearmarked reserves and the level of contingency available for allocation by the Executive and as a result of these movements, the estimated amount available in the Contingency Reserve at 31st March, 2010 was £0.221m. On the Housing Revenue Account the report noted an in-year projected overspend of £0.029M (compared to £0.100M at month 9).

The Head of Finance concluded by reporting that the net effect of the revised balance brought forward and the projected overspend of £0.029m was that balances were in hand at 31st March, 2010 of £1.250m which at 5.5% of total expenditure satisfied the prudent approach of ensuring a minimum level of 3%.

The Chief Executive updated Members on the over allocation of £1.156M to schools. He reported that discussions with schools on addressing the funding gap from future efficiencies through school modernisation were progressing. It was intended that the first call on efficiencies from future year's budget strategies would be to replenish reserves.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the carry forward requests included in the report (paragraph 3.09/3.12) be approved.
- (c) That the General Fund Contingency Sum available as at 31st March, 2010 (Section 5) be noted.
- (b) That the projected final level of balances on the Housing Revenue Account (paragraph 6.05) be noted.

310. WALKABOUT FLINTSHIRE

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report which updated Members on the work to sustain the Walkabout Flintshire programme beyond March 31, 2010.

The current walking scheme was one of the largest in Wales, with approximately 800 individuals walking and completing around 1600 walks each month. There had been considerable work undertaken over recent months to secure an on-going programme with the Friends of Walkabout Flintshire group and a proposal had been secured through detailed discussions with the Countryside/AONB service operated by Denbighshire County Council.

The Executive Member for Leisure, Public Protection and Clean Team Activity endorsed the report and reported that further discussions with the

Friends of Walkabout Flintshire had identified an agreed set of issues to form the basis of a Service Level Agreement between both Authorities, which were outlined in section 3.03 of the report.

RESOLVED

That the terms and cost of a Service Level Agreement with Denbighshire County Council enabling the new service to be in position from 1 April, 2010 be supported.

311. EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND PRIORITY FOUR

The Director of Environment advised the Executive of the current situation regarding the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Priority Four Programme and outlined the proposed changes to the sub-regional project to be submitted for EU support.

The Executive had agreed on 15 July, 2008 to support the submission of a joint bid with Wrexham Borough Council to the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) to improve transport links between areas of deprivation and employment hubs at Deeside Industrial Park and Wrexham town centre. The project was developed from January 2009 until September, 2009 when an Expression of Interest for the project was submitted by the Flintshire County Council transport team to WEFO. Subsequently, in November 2009, WEFO had taken the decision that the project was not suitable for support under this programme and suggested that another bid be submitted.

The Director of Environment reported that it was proposed that a project be developed to support the regeneration of town centres in Flintshire and Wrexham, for the reasons set out in section 3.01 of the report. It was estimated that the North East Wales project could bid for up to £1.875m between the authorities.

The Executive Member for Environment, Regeneration and Tourism endorsed the report and suggested that Saltney be added to the list of towns in Flintshire to receive investment in the 2011/12 financial year.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the proposal to develop and submit a proposal to the ERDF Priority 4 programme to fund town centre regeneration be supported.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Member for Environment, Regeneration and Tourism and Director of Environment to make arrangement for a temporary, fixed-term post to manage the programme if required.

312. REVISION OF THE FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CEMETERY REGULATIONS

The Executive Member for Housing Management and Function introduced the report of the Director of Environment on the revision of the Flintshire County Council Cemetery Regulations.

The current Cemetery Regulations first received approval in 2005 and were now in need of revision to reflect current best practice and procedures and to be more consistent with neighbouring Local Authorities. There was a need to revise and update current regulations to reflect changes in national standards to develop best practice and ensure consistency. The new cemetery at Kelsterton, Connah's Quay would incorporate the revised regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Cemetery Regulations for cemeteries in Flintshire be approved.

313. WALES AUDIT OFFICE, REVIEW OF CARBON MANAGEMENT, FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Director of Environment introduced a report on the findings made by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) in their review of Flintshire County Council's management of its Carbon emissions.

The Director of Environment reported that the Council was selected to be audited because of its good work and its performance in carbon management in comparison to other local authorities in Wales. The findings from the WAO would be used as a benchmark against which other Welsh Authorities would be compared. The Audit report detailed 6 recommendations set out within section 3.01 of the report, together with a statement of the Council's current position.

The Executive Member for Waste Management, Strategy and Function endorsed the report and advised Members that the Council had been successful in a recent bid for external funding which would increase the budget availability for energy efficiency works. The Chairman endorsed these comments and outlined the importance of this piece of work.

RESOLVED

That the WAO report and the positive work being undertaken by the Council in relation to Carbon Management be noted.

314. PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF DEE ROAD INFANTS AND CUSTOM HOUSE LANE JUNIOR SCHOOLS TO CREATE A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER 2012

The Director of Lifelong Learning updated Members on the statutory process for lodging formal objections to the above proposal, and sought formal approval to progress the proposed amalgamation and building of the new school.

The Director of Lifelong Learning reported that a display of the proposed plans for the school was made for the benefit of local residents. Several residents had expressed their concerns about the development of a new school on what was a school field which would need to be taken into account when the separate application for planning approval was lodged. The two month period for objections came to an end on 16 February, 2010. There were no formal objections to the proposal to amalgamate the two schools during this period.

The Director of Lifelong Learning wished to thank the School Governors and Staff at Dee Road Infants and Custom House Lane Junior School who had been championing the proposed amalgamation to ensure a better learning and working environment for the children.

RESOLVED

That the proposals to amalgamate Dee Road and Custom House Lane Schools in accordance with the published statutory proposals be approved.

315. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information report of the Chief Executive, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, was submitted. The purpose of the report was to inform Members of actions taken under delegated powers.

The actions taken were as set out below:-

Finance

- Interest rates to be applied to all car loans approved during 2010/11 in accordance with Flintshire's Environmental Policy Statement.

Environment

- Replacement of the Authority's existing Building Regulation Charges Scheme with effects from 1 April, 2010.
- Release of restrictive covenant at 8 Banks Road, Mancot, Flintshire.

Community Services

- Relief Staff – Learning Disability Services.
- Change from part time to full time post of Senior Practitioner, Hospital Social Work Team.
- Temporary Information Officer, 18.5 hours at Scale 6 for a period of 11 months.
- Part time Clerical Assistant Llys Eleanor.

316. REFERENCE BACK OF EXECUTIVE DECISION BY THE LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report which enabled the Executive to reconsider a decision from the previous meeting which was called in and subsequently referred back by the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At the meeting of the Executive which was held on 9 March, 2010 a report on Lettings Charges – Youth Centres was submitted. The recommendations of the Executive were set out in section 3.00 of the report. This Executive decision was called in by a group of Members on the basis of a £52,000 budget flaw that would delay the decision for 12 months and also that it should be considered at Scrutiny in order to find a better solution for helping both the Youth Service and the 15 play groups that need to hire the rooms and would be at risk of closure’.

The Director of Lifelong Learning outlined the current letting charges which had remained unchanged since 1 September, 2007. The current scheme of charges created the effect of subsidising community groups from the Youth Service Budget and the costs incurred were outlined within the report considered on 9 March, 2010 which detailed caretaker, heating and lighting costs.

The Head of Finance added that as part of the budget strategy, the authority was required to look at charges on an annual basis for Council services provided. Another factor was subsidy. It was recognised that the subsidy could not be eliminated through a single increase in charges; therefore the recommendation set out in section 4 of the report would begin to reduce the subsidy in a phased manner. If the authority wanted to subsidise a service, e.g. playgroups, it needed to be open and transparent and not be a hidden subsidy.

The Executive Member for Housing Management and Function sought clarification on whether PWC had recommended the Council to address the issue of letting charges. The Chief Executive advised that together with finance officers he was undertaking work to address all fees and charges. The incremental increases to Youth Centre lettings charges was recommended in order to reduce the risk to the Council in the future.

The Executive Member for Waste Management, Strategy and Function supported the comments of the Head of Finance and said that the Council must ensure that the letting charges was run on a business like basis.

RESOLVED

That a programme of incremental increase to Youth Centre letting charges be implemented from 1 April, 2010 as outlined in paragraph 4.01 of the 9 March, 2010 report.

317. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting as the following items were considered to be exempt by virtue of paragraphs 12, 14 and 15 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

318. NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING TEAM RESTRUCTURE

The Executive Member for Housing Management and Function introduced the report, the purpose of which was to update the Executive on progress in implementing the Housing Service Restructure and to seek support for the final proposals for the Housing Management Team restructure.

The Executive Member advised that the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered this report on 23rd March, 2010. Subsequently a revised recommendation was circulated which addressed the concerns of the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the restructure proposals be supported.
- (b) That the post of Senior Team Leader Void Properties be created for up to two years, but initially on a one year fixed term basis to lead the implementation of improvement actions to improve void property repair timescales.

319. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and ended at 10.25 a.m.

320. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were 2 members of the press and 2 members of the public in attendance.

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Chairman

SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT

EXECUTIVE	DATE: 30 March 2010
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
N. Phillips	Neighbourhood Housing Team Restructure	317