

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
5 DECEMBER 2007

Minutes of the Special meeting of the Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 5 December 2007.

PRESENT: Mrs A Minshull (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs D Banks (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: L A Aldridge, J B Attridge, S.R. Baker, D Barratt, J G Beard, Colin Bithell, R.C. Bithell, D Butler, J C Cattermoul, D L Cox, R Davies, A G Diskin, Mrs G D Diskin, Q R H Dodd, R C Dodd, B Dunn, C A Ellis, D Evans, E F Evans, H Gambino, Mrs R Griffiths, R J T Guest, R G Hampson, G Hardcastle, P G Heesom, H T Howorth, N Humphreys, H D Hutchinson, H T Isherwood, Mrs S Jones, C Legg, R P Macfarlane, E E Mathews, H J McGuill, W Mullin, J Ovens, M J Peers, N Phillips, K W Richardson, H G Roberts, I B Roberts, L A Sharps, C Shone, A P Shotton, I R Smith, W O Thomas, T Walker, W M Warburton, G D Williams, D E Wisinger, A Woolley, M G Wright.

APOLOGIES:

D M D Clayton, P J Curtis, C J Dolphin, F Gillmore, J J Griffiths, M Higham, G A Jones, J F Jones, R K Jones, Nancy Matthews, T Renshaw, N R Steele-Mortimer, Pamela J Walkden, D R Wilkes, D T M Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, County Legal & Democratic Services Officer, County Finance Officer, Acting Director of Community and Housing, Director of Adult Social Care, Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration, Assistant Director of School Services, Interim Head of Housing, Business Finance and Support Services Manager, Head of Committee, Elections and Members Services, Head of Overview and Scrutiny and Democratic Services Manager

CONTRIBUTORS:

Ms Lynn Hine and Mr D Newman of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

217. PRAYERS

The meeting was commenced with prayers said by the Chairman's Chaplin, Reverend Stephen Green.

218. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Phillips declared an interest in the following item:

Housing Stock Options Appraisal Progress Report (Minute No. 221).

Councillors Colin Bithell and D.B. Butler declared an interest in the following item:

Welsh Horticultural College Progress Report on the College's future (Minute No. 224).

219. ANNUAL LETTER FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2006/07

The Council considered the joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Strategy, the purposes of which was to present to the County Council the Annual Letter of the appointed Auditor and Relationship Manager, which summarised the work of the Wales Audit Office and PWC during 2007. Ms Lynn Hine and Mr David Newman attended to speak on this item. Mr Alan Morris, the Relationship Manager, gave his apologies for his non attendance as he was unwell and in the circumstances Mr Newman presented his part of the report. The Council noted that under the Code of Audit and Inspection Practice, the Relationship Manager was required to produce an Annual Letter summarising the work undertaken by the various Regulators. That letter incorporated a summary of work undertaken by the external auditor.

Circulated at the meeting was the report of the Chief Executive which detailed the Audit Committee's consideration of this matter at its meeting held on 28 November 2007. It was reported that at the meeting of the Audit Committee in responding to the presentation by the Regulators, the Chief Executive had set out the actions being taken on the key issues highlighted in the Annual Letter and these related to:

- Housing Services
- Waste Management Strategy
- Planning, Development Control
- Highways Infrastructure
- Annual Risk Assessment Process

Members of the Audit Committee had also requested a review of the Housing Warden Service and noted this would be considered in the appropriate forum in the near future.

In his report the Chief Executive had acknowledged the limitations of the letter as it was a commentary on areas covered by the Regulators over the previous year and did not cover all issues facing the Council. He made reference to the intention of the Corporate Management Team to make improvements to a number of corporate governance arrangements,

particularly on risk management. The Audit Committee subsequently resolved, as follows:

‘That the Audit Committee commend the report to Council, but recognises that although progress has been made, there are significant issues still to be addressed by Council.’

Ms Hine then took the Council through the report and identified the following, expanding upon the key points, as necessary:

- The Council’s 2006/2007 accounts presented fairly the financial position as at 31 March 2007.
- An examination of the Council’s significant financial system did not identify any material weaknesses in internal control.
- The Council had in place systems of internal financial control, recognised standard of financial conduct, legality requirement and arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.
- The Council had made effective use of the National Fraud Initiative to detect fraud.
- The overall corporal financial position remained under some pressure.
- The Council had made limited progress in achieving measuring and demonstrating efficiency gains.
- The Council had proper arrangements in 2006/07 to help it achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- The Council needed to complete and implement its fundamental review of its corporate management arrangements in order to address the limited strategic capacity identified in last year’s Annual Letter.
- The Council’s Improvement Plan had been delivered appropriately.

The Council was also informed that the findings from performance audit and inspection work undertaken indicated that many services were generally well run, although the Annual Risk Assessment identified some services for further work and these were, as follows:

- The Council should work with its Regulators to improve its Annual Risk Assessment process.
- The Housing Services faced fundamental changes and its structure and resources required urgent attention.

- The Council has conducted a significant review of the development and control function and the position was more satisfactory.
- The Council was now making good progress in its Waste Management Strategy, although its own landfill capacity was almost exhausted and risk remained over the regional solution.
- The condition of the Highway Infrastructure of the County compared favourably with that of other local authorities in Wales, however, this could change in the future as resources available for maintaining the infrastructure were increasingly inadequate.
- An Estyn inspection of school improvement rated the Council's performance as having good features with no important shortcomings and its prospects for improving as good, but with barriers in important areas.
- A CSSIW inspection of Children's Services concluded that 'whilst some children received a good service, overall services were inconsistent and the Council's ability to sustain and improve services was mainly well placed'.

It was also noted that as a result of the work undertaken by the appointed auditors and inspectors to form the basis of the Annual Letter that no statutory inspections were recommended.

Presenting that section of the report in the absence of Mr Alan Morris, Mr David Newman commented that he was pleased with the wider approach to risk management, he again expanded upon certain areas in the report and referred to the situation in relation to homelessness and also affordable housing, which were national problems. He acknowledged that, with regards to Development Control Function, work had already been done which was very pleasing. Similarly, work had also been undertaken in relation on the Waste Management Strategy. With regards to the situation with Highways, he also accepted that there were national funding issues in this area. Commenting on the Estyn Report, he reported on the plus points where the Council had performed particularly well.

In summarising, Ms Hine felt that it was a balanced report.

The Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee, in moving acceptance of the report, expressed his thanks to the Relationship Manager, PWC and the Council's internal audit section. He felt that the report was useful and although there were plus points there were a number of areas which still required attention. In seconding the proposal, the Leader of the Council wished a speedy recovery to Mr Alan Morris and also expressed his thanks to PWC for the presentation of the report.

The Leader was pleased with the positive remarks in the report and that in those areas where progress had been made reflected national priorities. He also commented that nothing contained in the letter had come as a surprise as in many areas the necessary work had commenced with progress being made.

A Member expressed a view that it was the first opportunity that he had to see the letter and he had not had a chance to make an input at the draft stage. Ms Hine advised that the report was submitted in draft form to Officers only for them to examine any factual issues and that no Members had been involved. The Chief Executive strongly confirmed that this was the case. The Member accepted the answer and commented upon the report where he acknowledged that there were some areas of progress, but there were still many areas which he felt were of high risk and he expanded upon these and felt it was necessary to underline risk areas as a priority.

The Executive Member for Community and Housing expressed his gratitude for the report and the assessment of the Housing Services. He acknowledged that certain areas merited attention, but was pleased that there were a number of positive comments about improvement in this service, which had been the cause of problems previously. He expanded upon a number of key points in the report and the progress made to date and whilst he was pleased with certain areas of progress, he stressed that he and colleagues would not be complacent and would strive to do all they could to make this service as efficient as possible.

A Member expressed his concern regarding the situation relating to Waste Management in the Buckley area. He requested support of PWC, the Chief Executive and the appropriate Executive Members to keep Members in that area fully briefed on what the intention was relating to waste disposal.

The Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, in referring to those areas, which came within his purview also referred to positive comments in the report and the progress made in the area of Development Control. He accepted that there were still some problems, but that proposals were in place to address these and he referred particularly to the revised staffing structure and that vacancies were currently being advertised. The issue of enforcement had been a problem over a number of years, but he was pleased that now some progress had been made in that area.

A Member also sought clarification on the period covered by the report and the comparison of data between particular years. Ms Hine clarified the inspection period and referred to the relevant section in her report. Subsequently the Member enquired if account had been taken of a particular Ombudsman Report and Ms Hine explained that this was not a feature of the relationship of the Auditor with the Ombudsman and clarified the role of the regulators. The Member sought further clarification on the calculation of performance indicators and Ms Hine again referred him to the appropriate section in the report.

Other Members also commented upon those areas for concern, but were also pleased to note that there were certain areas where major improvements had been made which were clearly acknowledged in the report. They were also pleased to note that the Council had the best ratio of top-to-bottom quartile performance when compared with other local authorities in Wales. The Estyn Report had also identified areas where the Council was the best performer in Wales.

As a way forward, a Member suggested that the report did have criticisms, but felt that they should be noted at this meeting and examined by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees as the matters would be brought forward by Officers over the coming weeks and months. Members also took into account the commitment of Executive Members to seek improvement in specific areas and the fact that much work had already commenced.

In summarising, the Chief Executive hoped that he had clarified the process regarding the consideration of the letter and the role of Officers and Members. He indicated, along with the Corporate Management Team, that he was keen to take up the challenges in the report. He also explained that there were a number of national issues which were not always within the control of the Council. The Chief Executive stressed that it was important not to be always critical because it was the responsibility of Members as employers to de-motivate staff. With regard to Development Control and the issues previously raised by the auditors, he referred to the constructive meetings already held by the Planning Protocol Working Group with their subsequent recommendations to the Executive.

In commenting on the questions raised on Waste Management, the Chief Executive advised it would be improper for PWC to comment on this issue because there were planning applications in being. However, he concurred it was important to keep Members informed on such issues. He very much shared the views of members who had concerns regarding risk management. However, he had already had positive meetings with Officers on this issue. The Chief Executive felt it was important to note the assurances given in the report on the financial standing of the Council and that no high risk areas had been identified.

Following a request by members he gave an assurance that Overview and Scrutiny would not be omitted in the process of reviewing the issues raised by the auditors.

The Leader of the Council in summarising felt that the Council should take on board the issues raised and the points raised by the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

220. CONSTITUTION. SUSPENSION OF RULE OF PROCEDURE 13.4

It was proposed and seconded that Rule of Procedure 13.4 be suspended whereby there was a not five minutes restriction on the time allowed for members to speak, for the following item only

RESOLVED:

That the Rule of Procedure be suspended accordingly.

221. HOUSING STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL PROGRESS REPORT

Pursuant to Minute No. 218 Councillor N. Phillips left the meeting for this item.

Further to the Special Meeting of the County Council held on 27 September 2007 and subsequent discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government, the Council considered the previously circulated joint report of the Chief Executive, Acting Director of Community and Housing, County Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the progress and discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government on the Council's preferred option to retain the local social housing stock within its ownership and control. It was now necessary to seek guidance and direction from Members.

By way of background, the Council was reminded that it had received a report, which evaluated the options for achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, at the Special Meeting held on 27 September 2007. At that meeting the Council opted to retain its public sector stock within its ownership and control and had instructed Officers to open discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government. The Council had been required to communicate a decision on its preferred option to the Assembly Government by the end of September to offset any risk of withdrawal of its major repairs allowance (MRA). The Council had understood that the Assembly would have to be satisfied that the Council could develop the outline business plan, as presented at that meeting into a full, affordable and achievable business plan which would ensure compliance with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. Welsh Assembly Government policy was based upon the presumption that should a Council be unable to submit a full and compliant business plan to retain its stock to their satisfaction, it must proceed to ballot tenants on potential transfer options.

A cross party delegation of group leaders or their representatives met with the Deputy Minister for Housing, Jocelyn Davies AM and Senior Civil Servants in the Welsh Assembly Government in Cardiff on 15 November 2007 and were accompanied and advised by the Chief Executive and the Acting Director of Community and Housing. The Chief Executive reported upon the discussions and advised that confidentiality had been respected. The threat of removal of the MRA (Major Repairs Allowance) had been withdrawn and this was a welcome decision.

The Chief Executive reported upon the significance of discussions relating to environmental standards and the Management and Maintenance (M&M) Allowance figures. He explained in detail upon the figures identified by the Council and the highest tolerance figure which was viable on Management and Maintenance Allowances for the business case to be based. This differed substantially from what the Welsh Assembly Government was prepared to accept and in the circumstances the Council's financial model was no longer viable. He quoted figures in support of that. The financial model had been re-worked to see the effects of a real terms growth of 2% in Management and Maintenance Allowance rather than the 4.75% included in the model considered by Council on 27th September 2007 on the advice of Assembly Officers. Whilst Welsh Assembly Government had not endorsed the inclusion of 2% above RPI it had indicated that this was the highest level included by other Local Authorities whose business plans had been submitted to Welsh Assembly Government. This further modelling showed that if an assumption of 2% above inflation was made for the whole of the 30 year business plan and the HRA was kept in balance in those years there was a funding gap of £31.14 m over the 30 year period. It was stressed that local authorities could not budget for the HRA to be in deficit. In these circumstances the Chief Executive explained, it was his opinion that the risk in the retention model was too high in view of the figures quoted. In support of this, the County Finance Officer, in her Section 151 role, expanded upon the detail of the figures and their affect on the Council over a 30-year period. She strongly advised against the retention option on financial grounds because in view of the remodelled management and maintenance allowances the risks to the Council were too great. The HRA could not be sustained over the period without going into deficit.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chief Executive for the advice and the detail of the figures quoted. He also expressed his thanks to the cross party delegation who had attended the meeting with the Deputy Housing Minister. The Leader expressed his disappointment at the meeting with the Deputy Housing Minister and the reception that the delegation had received. He felt that there was a clear mandate from the Council on what it hoped to achieve. He also felt it appropriate for the Council to act in the way it did in the interest of its tenants. The Leader reported that progress had been made regarding the timing of the implementation of the Welsh Housing Quality standard beyond 2012.

There was also an acknowledgement of the points raised by the Council regarding environmental maintenance and the effect this had on the financial aspects within the model. However, with regard to the management and maintenance allowances, there was no movement in that area from the Welsh Assembly Government. Although it appeared that they did not have to follow strictly to Treasury rules they were doing so and any change would be contrary to those rules. The Leader also referred to the issue of non-traditional properties and the intention of the Council to provide properties fit for purpose. However, on the advice of the Chief Executive and the County Finance Officer, and in noting the risks it presented to Council, he felt that the retention option could no longer be supported.

There were a number of key issues that still had to be addressed and assurances from the Welsh Assembly Government were required concerning specific dowry levels, employment issues for existing staff and other specific transfer models. Tenants were the most important factor and assurances would be sought on their rights and a solution for the long term future of non-traditional housing stock. The Leader again referred to the unfairness of the legislation relating to funding whereby the Council could not receive the same levels of financial support received as other registered social landlords could.

In taking into account all the circumstances, he proposed that the Council undertake further immediate discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government to examine the principles upon which any ballot of tenants would be based.

The Executive Member for Community and Housing expressed his sadness that retention was no longer a viable option. His strong view was always that the Council should retain its social housing function and it was his wish for Flintshire to be the best in Wales. He referred to the high amount of rent income which was passed to the Welsh Assembly Government each year with very little being returned to the Authority. In the circumstances in view of the stance taken by the Welsh Assembly Government, he felt that he could not put the Council at risk. Therefore he felt that the advice of the Officers should be taken and he seconded the proposal.

Following a question by a Member, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the motion proposed did not negate the decision of the Council taken at the meeting held on 27th September 2007 within a six-month period and therefore was not contrary to the constitution.

The Leader of the main Opposition Group, who was part of the delegation had a different view on the outcome of the meeting with the representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government. He felt that there was no strong evidence from them that they were rejecting the Council's business plan and he did not necessarily accept the figures referred to at today's meeting. He felt that the two key issues related to the management and maintenance allowance (M&M) and how best to deal with non-traditional housing. The Member reiterated his previously expressed personal view that the stock condition survey undertaken was not sustainable. He felt that the principle of the ballot should not be considered at this stage, but that discussions should proceed with the Welsh Assembly Government on issues from the previous meeting. He felt there was still some movement available and that he would need to see the figures in detail quoted earlier in the meeting before being convinced.

The Chief Executive responded to a number of the points raised and referred to the advice given by himself and the County Finance Officer at the commencement of the meeting. He referred to the financial gap between the Council's proposal and what was acceptable to the Welsh Assembly Government and that it was unlawful for the Council to knowingly go into

deficit in the Housing Revenue Account and that was an essential part of the consideration. He explained that the issue of the non-traditional stock was still to be addressed and assurances would be sought and that whilst options were being pursued, there was no final decision, as there were a number of key points still to be clarified as part of the discussion.

A Member on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group had sympathy for the views expressed by the Leader and the Executive Member for Community and Housing and supported much of what they said about the principles of social housing. He explained that whilst his group did not support the previous motion at the County Council it was on the basis that they did not feel that the Council would be in a position to persuade the Welsh Assembly Government to change their mind on the financial aspect. He expressed a view that it would now be appropriate to vote on the principle of stock transfer. However, as the meeting progressed he accepted assurances from the Leader of the Council and therefore did not pursue this point.

Another Member expressed his dissatisfaction at the current legislation which he felt was stacked against local authorities. He concurred with the view that every possible piece of information should be available to tenants for them to make an informed decision which he stressed they were capable of doing. He was also concerned that the Council would still have the issue of homelessness to address without the available accommodation to assist with that process. He shared the view that the Council had little option in view of the financial implications as outlined earlier by the Chief Executive and County Finance Officer. Alternatively, another Member felt that the Council could have a role to play in social housing, but not necessarily in this traditional way and gave examples of how this may be achieved. However, he concurred that it would be necessary to go to ballot. When questioned by a Member, the Chief Executive clarified the position in relation to the tenants' rights to say yes or no in the context of the ballot. He clarified the point relating to knowingly going into deficit in the Housing Revenue account budget, which was unlawful.

Following points pursued by other members the Chief Executive confirmed that there was still no firm advice from the Welsh Assembly Government if the vote by tenants was against the transfer option. A Member also commented upon the historical aspect of social housing and very much defended the delegation that had attended the meeting with the Welsh Assembly Government which he felt was the correct and proper action to try and achieve the best for the Council tenants. However, he concurred with the view that the Council has gone as far as it possibly could. A number of Members endorsed the view on that it was necessary to do as much as possible to obtain the relevant advice for tenants.

The Chief Executive responded and confirmed the position relative to the use of capital receipts. Referring to the stock survey, he advised that Savills who had undertaken the work were experienced in Wales and their expertise was accepted by the Welsh Assembly Government on such issues. He also explained that if there was a 'no' vote it would not be necessary to

meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standards by the given date. He further explained the figures relative to the management and maintenance allowance and the gap on the Housing Revenue Account as it progressed over a number of years which became considerable as it advanced through the 30 year period.

In summing up, the Leader of the Council felt that it was inevitable that a ballot would take place at some stage. However, currently he felt it appropriate to seek as much information as possible to help the tenants in making an informed decision. He also felt it essential to pursue the issues regarding the dowry and other financial aspects to the Council and stressed again the importance of the welfare of the tenants. He formally moved the motion.

A recorded vote was requested and was supported by the requisite ten Members on being put to the vote the proposition was CARRIED by 46 votes to 2 with 1 abstention. The voting being, as follows:

FOR THE MOTION: Councillors: L A Aldridge, J B Attridge, S R Baker, D Barratt, J G Beard, C Bithell, R C Bithell, D Butler, J C Cattermoul, D L Cox, R Davies, Mrs G D Diskin, Q R H Dodd, R C Dodd, B Dunn, C A Ellis, E F Evans, H Gambino, Mrs R Griffiths, R J T Guest, R G Hampson, G Hardcastle, H T Howorth, N Humphries, H T Isherwood, Mrs S Jones, C Legg, R P MacFarlane, H J McGuill, W Mullin, J Ovens, M J Peers, K W Richardson, H G Roberts, I B Roberts, A P Shotton, I R Smith, W O Thomas, T Walker, W M Warburton, G D Williams, D E Wisinger, A Woolley, M G Wright, Mrs A Minshull and Mrs D Banks.

AGAINST THE MOTION: Councillors: D. Evans, P G Heesom,

ABSTENTION: Councillor C Shone

RESOLVED:

The Council undertakes further and immediate discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government to examine the principles upon which any ballot of tenants would be based.

222. MR PAUL HORLESTON

The Chief Executive reported upon the sad death of Mr Paul Horleston. He was a consultant who had been engaged by the Council to undertake detailed financial modelling work in relation to the housing stock options. Members recorded their condolences.

223. CONNAH'S QUAY SOUTH ELECTORAL DIVISION CASUAL VACANCIES

The Chief Executive reported that this vacancy would now be advertised

224. STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2008-2011 – LICENSING ACT 2003

The Council considered the report of the County Legal and Democratic Service Officer, previously circulated, the purpose of which was to adopt a Statement of Licensing Policy which would come into effect on 1st January, 2008 for a three year period. The Council was informed that at the meeting held on 12th November, 2007 the Licensing Committee considered the report of the Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration, which was attached as Appendix A, in relation to the Statement of Licensing Policy which went out for extensive consultation between June and September 2007. The purpose of the consultation was to invite comments and observations on the first three years operation of the Licensing Policy for the period of 2004-2007. The Act required the Licensing Authority, every three years to determine its policy in respect of the exercise of its licensing functions and publish a statement of that policy before the beginning of the period; the next period began on 1st January 2008. The Licensing Committee responded to the responses which were detailed in the report.

The Officers had also suggested that the Policy should also include paragraphs on two particular issues and these related to designated premises supervisors and the advent of the smoke-free premises etc., (Wales) Regulations 2007. The Licensing Committee fully supported the recommendations relative to these issues. The Statement of Licensing Policy was attached as Appendix B and reflected the recommendations agreed by the Committee. The Acting Director of Environment and Regeneration indicated that he would pursue issues in relation to issues and procedures raised by members and report back to them.

RESOLVED:

The Statement of Licensing Policy, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, be adopted for the period 2008-2011 with effect from 1st January 2008.

225. WELSH COLLEGE OF HORTICULTURAL – PROGRESS REPORT ON THE COLLEGE'S FUTURE

Pursuant to Minute No. 218 Councillors C Bithell and D Butler left the meeting for this item.

The Chief Executive reported verbally on this issue. He advised of possible merger of the Welsh College of Horticultural with other further education establishments. He explained the significance of this in relation to Deeside College. The Leader of the Council commented upon this and expressed his concern that the Council had not been consulted on this issue, which could have a very significant affect on the area. Members shared his concern, particularly as both colleges were situated in Flintshire and there was distinct lack of consultation. The Chief Executive advised of the discussions he had had with the Principal of the Horticultural College. The Leader was of the opinion that representation should be made to the

appropriate Minister of the Welsh Assembly Government and Members concurred with this view.

RESOLVED:

That John Griffiths AM, the Deputy Minister for Skills of the Welsh Assembly Government be requested to directly intervene to ensure that the Council receives the necessary consultation opportunity and adequate time to consider any possible merger arrangement.

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

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the following item, as it was considered to contain exempt information by virtue of paragraphs 12 and 15 of Part 1, Scheduled 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

226. SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive, previously circulated, the purpose of which was to appraise Members of the developing proposals to consolidate the senior management structure of the Council. He also wished to seek endorsement of the proposals for:

- i) detailed development, and
- ii) collective and individual consultation during the months of December and January.

In his report, the Chief Executive explained that the Council had not completed the review of the Senior Management Structure. Options for the review of the structure have been discussed within the Council in the recent past and action was deferred pending the appointment of a new Chief Executive. No further work was done by the Council in preparation for structural change in advance of the arrival of the new Chief Executive in mid-September. Therefore, in preparing for any situation of the position, the Chief Executive personally developed outline proposals to consolidate the senior management structure. This proposal had been advanced with a full involvement of the existing Corporate Management Team. The Chief Executive had a mandate to review the structure given the deferral of the structural review pending his appointment.

He explained that there was an expectation that change would be proposed and that revisions to the structure would be implemented without undue delay.

The Chief Executive reported that the business case, review and the consolidation of the senior management structure were fivefold and these

points were detailed in his report. The Chief Executive made a PowerPoint presentation in support of his report.

In opening that presentation, the Chief Executive reported that the proposals now submitted had the full backing of the existing management team. He referred to the consolidation of senior management structure which was part of a wider Council reform plan and also development of a Flintshire (Contingent) Model. He advised that it was not a wholesale restructure or change for changes sake or even a “textbook” solution. The presentation detailed the business case and asked what sort of organisation did the Council aspire to be. He referred to the wider changes and reforms in Flintshire and the parameters for structural change. Within the section on effective role of a modern Flintshire, he advised on the roles of Directors and Heads of Service. The Chief Executive identified a Phase I and a Phase II approach and the proposals for consideration as part of the Phase I review. He then referred to the democratic implications and upon the process and timetable for Phase I. He expanded upon the process and timetable for Phase II. It was explained that there was a considerable amount of development work and this was explained in the presentation.

The Council was informed of the consultation procedure and the need for effective communications. There were some interim organisational issues and the Chief Executive explained how he intended these to be addressed. He sought the Council’s endorsement for the detailed development of plans and for the collective and individual consultation identified in his presentation. In referring to the interim arrangements, he explained it was necessary for him to have staff in place to ensure continuation of service and he therefore sought delegated authority for him to make any interim management arrangements.

In expanding on the report and responding to points by Members he explained that the implications should be cost neutral. With regard to the assimilation process, he explained that this would only take place where officers had an 80% job match based on their substantive post. Expanding upon this point he explained that there were certain officers who were in interim or enhanced posts, but it would not be on this basis that they would be considered for assimilation. Following a further question from a Member he reassured them that people in interim posts would not be slotted into a post, and that the usual competition procedure would apply.

The Leader of the Council spoke in support of the proposals and felt it essential for the Council to have a structure which would be best for its future development. He acknowledged the role of the Corporate Management team who had endorsed the principle of the restructuring. The leader of the main opposition group sought involvement of group leaders in the Democratic process.

Following up a point made by a Member regarding interim proposals, the Chief Executive confirmed that he would advise Members of any arrangements made, so that they would be aware of contact points. At this

stage, the Chief Executive stressed that he did not wish to mention any specific Members of staff and that the point of this discussion related to the structures and the start of the consultation process.

Members thanked the Chief Executive for the thoroughness of his report and thought it was an excellent starting point to proceed.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Council endorse the proposal for structure change for
 - a) detailed development of plans
 - b) collective and individual consultation
 - c) that delegated authority be given for the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader/Deputy Leader and respective Executive Members to extend or make interim management arrangements to ensure business and managerial continuity.

227. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were three members of the press and six members of the public

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Chairman

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

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	DATE: 5 December 2007
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
Councillor N Phillips	Housing Stock Options Appraisal	221
Councillor C Bithell Councillor D Butler	Welsh Horticultural College Progress Report	224