

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2008**

Minutes of a Special Meeting of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold held on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2008.

**PRESENT:**

**Councillor: Q.R.H. Dodd (Chairman)**

**Councillor: C. Legg (Vice-Chairman)**

**Councillors:** L.A. Aldridge, K. Armstrong-Braun, J.B. Attridge, S.R. Baker, D. Barratt, G.H. Bateman, R.C. Bithell, C.S. Carver, E.G. Cooke, R. Davies, C.J. Dolphin, B. Dunn, Mrs C.A. Ellis, E.F. Evans, J.E. Falshaw, Ms V. Gay, F. Gilmore, R.J.T. Guest, R.G. Hampson, G. Hardcastle, P.G. Heesom, M. Higham, R. Hughes, H.D. Hutchinson, Mrs C.M. Jones, R.B. Jones, Mrs S. Jones, D.I Mackie, Mrs D. L Mackie, Mrs N.M. Matthews, Mrs A. Minshull, W. Mullin, E.W. Owen, M.J. Peers, N. Phillips, M.A. Reece, H.G. Roberts, I.B. Roberts, L.A. Sharps, A.P. Shotton, N.R. Steele-Mortimer, Mrs C.A. Thomas, D.E. Wisinger, A. Woolley, M.G. Wright and Ms H. Yale.

**APOLOGIES:**

**Councillors:** D.L. Cox, P.J. Curtis, Mrs A.J. Davies-Cooke, Mrs R. Dolphin, Miss A.M. Halford, Mrs C. Hinds, Mrs N. Humphreys, G. James, R. Johnson, R.P. Macfarlane and P.R. Pemberton.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Environment, Director of Lifelong Learning, County Legal and Democratic Services Officer, County Finance Officer, Head of Overview and Scrutiny and Head of Committee, Members and Electoral Services.

**80. PRAYERS**

The Reverend Martin Bachelor conducted prayers at the commencement of the meeting.

**81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**82. COUNCIL MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

- (b) That the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTER ARISING:-**

**Members Present**

Councillor Robin Baker said that he was present at the meeting and wished for this to be recorded and Councillor D. Wisinger had submitted an apology and asked for this to be recorded.

**83. AWARDS**

**Tidy Wales Award 2008**

The Chairman was pleased to invite colleagues who had won awards to this meeting of the County Council and on behalf of Members he congratulated both winners.

**Large Partnership Award Category**

The Chairman presented Mr Dave Faulkner and Mr Mike Taylor representing Countryside Services who had won the award for the Big Dee Day and made reference to the event which had seen volunteers cleaning the coastline from Talacre to Chester.

**Schools Category**

The Chairman presented the award to representatives of Hawarden High School which had won the award for their Dell project. There had been 250 school applications for this award and he paid tribute to the staff and pupils on this achievement.

Councillor L.A. Sharps said that he had been present at the presentation of the awards in Cardiff and paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken by the Countryside Services Team and the Hawarden High School. He also thanked the Chairman for allowing the presentations to be made at this Council meeting.

Councillors N.R. Steele-Mortimer and K. Armstrong-Braun both endorsed the comments made and expressed their appreciation of the work undertaken on both schemes.

**84. COMMUNITY SAFETY AND POLICING**

The Chairman welcomed Chief Superintendent Ruth Purdie to the meeting and the Chief Executive explained that she would be giving a presentation on the work and priorities of the Community Safety Partnership, the Policing Green Paper and the Government "Contest" Anti-Terrorism Strategy.

Chief Superintendent Purdie thanked the County Council for its invitation to make a presentation at this meeting which she understood was the first to be made by North Wales Police to a formal Council meeting. The presentation made reference to the work and priorities of the Community Safety Partnership and outlined the key issues. This included the environmental audits, communications, and the facilities that were made available on the Police Authority website, community engagement, dangerous persons, vulnerable people, problem solving activity, Police Community Support Officers and overall quality of service and community activity.

Chief Superintendent Purdie then referred to counter-terrorism and the North Wales perspective of the Wales Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Unit and the collaboration between the four Welsh Police Authorities. The information provided in the presentation was restricted and she was only able to make reference to information that was currently in the public domain. As a result of the bombings in London on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the situation had changed significantly in the United Kingdom and she emphasised the importance of community policing to gain information as activity and risks in the community. The "Contest" Strategy comprised the four Ps of Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Prepare and she gave further information on each of these categories which were linked by a common thread of community intelligence.

In conclusion, the Chief Superintendent referred to the Policing Green Paper on which the Community Safety Partnership had submitted a response and she outlined the key areas.

At the conclusion of the presentation Members were given the opportunity to raise questions and a number of points were raised. These included the proposals in the Police Green Paper which included potential changes to the membership of Police Authorities. A number of Members expressed concern on this proposal and the impact it would have on elected member representation. A number of Members made reference to neighbourhood policing and to what they considered to be the high turnover of Community Beat Managers, particularly in the rural areas, and to the large geographical areas that the Officers had to deal with. Councillor K. Armstrong-Braun also referred to drug problems in the locality and made reference to difficulties experienced by members of the public and the call centre system that was in operation.

Chief Superintendent Purdie responded to the issues raised and agreed to investigate specific issues. On the difficulties referred to on public contact and the call centre she asked the Member to provide details of these particular instances which would be investigated; she also offered the Member the opportunity to visit the call centre which was considered to be the best in the United Kingdom. On the issues of drugs she again asked the Member to provide evidence to substantiate his claims and these would be investigated. In response to Councillor Aldridge who had also asked for these claims to be substantiated on this issue she said she would attend a meeting of Flint Town Council if invited.

In conclusion, the Leader of the Council thanked the Chief Superintendent for her attendance at the meeting and referred to the WLGA's response on the Green Paper which was robust and had incorporated all the Council's concerns and he looked forward to receiving the White Paper. In this regard, the Chief Executive referred to the Community Safety Partnership in the Green Paper response which expressed concern on the governance issues in the Green Paper and had supported the need to protect the role of the elected Member. The Council also supported the response of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on the Green Paper.

## **85. ANNUAL LETTER FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2007/08**

The Chief Executive introduced a report the purpose 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 (WAO) and Pricewaterhousecoopers (PWC) during 2008. He then introduced the Relationship Manager Mr Alan Morris of WAO and Mr David Newman of PWC who would give a short presentation on the annual letter.

Mr David Newman referred to the summary and to the reference that that it had not been possible to conclude the audit opinion on the Council's accounts as due to the outstanding A.D. Waste Ltd annual accounts and the transfer of operations to the Council preventing the company's auditors from reaching an opinion on its accounts. He was pleased to report that ADW's Auditors had now provided an opinion and it was expected that the Council's accounts would be signed off within the next few days. He also made reference to the Council's Improvement Planning arrangements which had complied with statutory requirements and to areas where further work was required. The Council also had satisfactory arrangements in 2007/08 to assist it achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in issues of resources. He also noted that the Council faced potential difficulty and delay in recovering its investments of £3.7m in Landsbanki, the Icelandic bank but commented that the investments were consistent with the Treasury Management policy in operation at the time and only formed a modest proportion of the total value of the Council's investment as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

The Relationship Manager, Mr Alan Morris, referred to the Annual Joint Risk Assessment arrangement which had improved significantly and there was now a clear mechanism in place. The first phase of the Council's organisational transformation had been completed in line with the original plan, time frame and within budget. There was a clear positive message on the progress being made and there was still more work to be undertaken on phase two and the lower management tiers. The urgency of the housing strategy situation had been noted together with the extension of time granted by the Minister to March 2009 and this needed to be continued as a priority. Progress continued to be made with changes to the structure, management and working practices within the Planning and Development Control section and some of the intended enhancements were to be completed. The new

integrating HR/Payroll system when fully operational would provide enhanced management information on a range of HR issues.

The Chief Executive thanked David Newman and Alan Morris for their presentation and explained that the process of the annual letter drafting had been a challenging one. He thanked the Audit Committee for its consideration at the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November and the annual letter represented a constructive and positive response which recognised progress made in 2007/08. There were a number of points which were not reflected in the letter which included organisational change, where it had not been recognised that services had been protected during the period of interim arrangements, a testament to the Officers and Members. There was no detailed reference to the economic downturn which would be the greatest financial pressure on the Council. The work undertaken on the Medium Term Financial Strategy to date had not been specifically recognised and a number of business process changes.

Reference was made to the housing strategy. A Special Meeting of the County Council would be held in January 2009 at which a decision on the way forward would be required. In regard to Planning and Development Control, the Planning Protocol Working Group was to be reconvened and the HRMIS system had been implemented in November with only minor operational issues. The contractor report had only just been completed and this would be considered by the Audit Committee and Executive in the New Year.

The County Finance Officer referred to the A D Waste accounts which had now been signed off by the company's auditors Deloitte the previous day. In making reference to the Council's accounts and the complex/technical process that was required she expressed an appreciation of the Member input and paid credit to the Officers in her own department and service departments who had been involved in closing the accounts for 2007/08.

Councillor I.B. Roberts, as Chairman of the Audit Committee referred to the full debate on the Annual Letter which had taken place at the Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 and made particular reference to the Annual Performance Report which commented that the Council was ranked as the fourth highest performing authority in Wales. He thanked everyone involved in the process. The Audit Committee had resolved that the Committee was satisfied that the letter presented a fair and balanced picture, that the Committee was satisfied with the response that the Council had made and the progress outlined in the letter and had noted the positive comments on performance and the acceptance of challenges. He duly moved these recommendations and this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee.

The Chief Executive responded to questions raised by Members and the letter recognised the Council's performance in relation to other Welsh Local Authorities. On the issue of partnership with other Local Authorities and the reference made to the former Wirral and North Wales Purchasing Organisation. He explained that this was the only notable joint venture that

had failed in North Wales as a result of particular circumstances at that time. The Relationship Manager emphasised the benefits that could be achieved through such joint arrangements and whilst such arrangements could bring benefits there was a need to consider the risks and to ensure that the partnership delivered what was intended. This was a real challenge for North Wales but the initial signs were very positive.

The Chief Executive then referred to a question regarding the current housing review and confirmed that the Deputy Minister had originally agreed to an extension of time to December 2008. However, following a recent meeting of the Housing Strategy Review Board, the Minister had been asked to allow the Council a further extension of time to complete the business case for a partial transfer option. A potential further three months extension to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 had been agreed by the Deputy Minister. A Special Meeting of the County Council was to be held in January when consideration would be given to a business plan being capable of completion within the three months extension, dependent in the viability of a partial transfer model. A request to the Minister was made on the strict basis that the Council fully accepted that should partial transfer options prove, with external validation, to be unfeasible, the Council, at the January meeting, would have no option but to formally accept that it must move to ballot on a full transfer model.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report and recommendations of the Audit Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 be noted.

**86. NOTICE OF MOTION**

**Procurement of Products and Services from Local Suppliers**

The following Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor M. Wright:-

“That this Council should increase the number of local suppliers it procures products and services from and that we should settle payment for those services, where that business has less than 250 employees (i.e. it is a small business), within 15 days maximum.”

Councillor Wright formally proposed the motion and this was duly seconded. In speaking to his motion, Councillor Wright referred to the current difficulties of the economy and his motion was intended to assist local businesses with their cash flow.

Other Members spoke in support of the motion making reference to the difficulties that small companies had in getting on the Council's contractor list but also recognising the need to ensure that services were sustainable in the long term.

Councillor A.P. Shotton said that whilst accepting the principle of the Notice of Motion and the need for expedient payment of invoices, questioned whether it was correct for the County Council to be considering such a change to policy as this was covered by the Council's financial regulations and standing orders. Councillor R.C. Bithell also referred to previous consideration that had been given to try and procure supplies from local businesses which had not always proved possible and this needed further investigation.

Councillor R. Baker proposed an amendment to the Notice of Motion that the addition of "wherever possible and practical" be inserted after the first word "That" and this was seconded. Councillor M. Wright with the agreement of his seconder, agreed to accept the suggested amendment.

The Chief Executive referred to Councillor Shotton's comments on determining policy and confirmed that it was not possible to agree an amended policy without giving the matter further exploration. He referred to the existing practice of maximising performance on paying invoices within 30 days, with the exception of disputed invoices, but noted there were Government proposals to reduce this to 10/15 days. The Council also had a procurement strategy and its provisions would need to be revisited.

The County Finance Officer said work would be required on the detailed implementation of the Notice of Motion. She also referred to the Welsh Assembly Government which was looking at reducing the timescale for payment of invoices. Such a proposal would present cash flow implications for Local Authorities with cash being moved out of the Authority more quickly and there was currently consultation on whether the Revenue Support Grant would be paid quicker by the Welsh Assembly Government to compensate Councils. There was a meeting of Welsh Finance Directors the following day and this would be considered at that meeting.

The County Legal and Democratic Services Officer referred to EEC directives and new regulations and at the meeting of the County Council on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2008 agreement had been made on the recommendations of the Constitution Committee which included a review of the contract procedure rules.

The Council then considered the Notice of Motion as amended, and on being put to the vote it was duly carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That wherever possible and practical, this Council should increase the number of local suppliers it procures products and services from and that we should settle payment for those services, where that business has less than 250 employees (i.e. it is a small business), within 15 days maximum.

**87. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2008**

The Chief Executive reported that a Special Meeting of the County Council was to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 to consider Single Status and the recommended employer position and pay model. This was an important matter for the Council's consideration and Member's attendance was emphasised. It was also intended to offer a number of workshops and individual briefings to allow Members to understand the issues of Single Status and the pay model.

Councillor B. Attridge referred to an Allocations Workshop that was to be held at Theatre Clwyd on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 for which he had recently received notification, which would clash with the Council meeting. The Director of Community Services agreed to reschedule the Allocations Workshop.

**RESOLVED:**

That the information provided by the Chief Executive and the reasons for the Special County Council meeting to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 at 2pm, be noted.

**88. DURATION OF MEETING**

The meeting commenced at 2pm and finished at 4.30pm.

**89. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

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**Chairman**



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

<b>FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL</b>	<b>DATE: 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2008</b>
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<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>MIN. NO. REFERS</b>
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		