

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 APRIL 2013 (10AM)

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 10 April 2013 at 10am

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors Haydn Bateman, Derek Butler, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Ian Dunbar (for Ann Minshull)

APOLOGIES: Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure and Chief Regeneration Officer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Patrick Heesom and Richard Lloyd

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste & Recycling, Director of Environment, Highways Strategy Manager, Economic Development Manager, Communities First Programme Manager and Senior Business Advisor

Ms. Lowri Owain of Cadwyn Clwyd

IN ATTENDANCE: Acting Overview & Scrutiny Manager and Committee Officer

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor C.A. Thomas declared an interest in Agenda Item 4.

74. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 January and 6 March 2013 had been circulated with the agenda.

Accuracy - 6 March 2013

Councillor C.J. Dolphin said that the statement about pre payment meters on page 12 was incorrect. The Director of Environment said that the minute was correct. He said that he would check if pre payment meter owners were excluded from the scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS

The Economic Development Manager presented the report to update members on developments with the Rural Development Plan (RDP). The Rural Development Plan had now entered the final stages and the Welsh Government (WG) had approved extensions and enhancements to the projects to the end of 2014. This 12 month extension would provide the necessary time to ensure that the projects were successfully concluded to budget and schedule.

Looking ahead, the WG had recently launched its consultation on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform for the new 2014-2020 RDP Programme. Flintshire County Council, the Flintshire Rural Partnership and Cadwyn Clwyd would all submit responses to the WG by mid April. The European Structural Fund Programmes for 2014-2020 were also under development. It was expected that less funding would be available than previously. WG was consulting on its proposed approach to the new programmes and the County Council would respond to this consultation at the end of April.

The Leader of the Council conveyed apologies from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure. He stressed the importance of Assisted Area funding which was critical to many businesses in the County and more so, due to the Deeside Enterprise Zone. The Enhanced Capital Allowance incentive to lure big businesses to Flintshire would be put at risk if Assisted status was not secured. He added that many investments may not have happened if not for the funding and urged Members to lobby North Wales MEPs over the matter.

The Chairman stated that the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee would do all it could to support the process.

The Highways Strategy Manager gave an update on 'Linking Flintshire's Communities', which was part of the RDP. Signage had now been installed on the the A548 at Gronant and the Pegasus scheme and new road layout was due to be completed in May 2013. Design work for Footpath 64 had been completed and Footpath 69 design work was almost complete.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin suggested that Whitford, Carmel and Gorsedd should be included in future linking community projects as they had no facilities apart from a pub and school.

Councillor P.J. Curtis said that the surrounding villages of Holywell would also be suited to such a project as well as Greenfield Dock, St Winifred's Well and St Beuno's.

Councillor C. Legg said that he wanted to see more safe cycling routes and asked if Flintshire were involved with Sustrans.

The Highways Strategy Manager said that he understood the issues and concerns raised in relation to linking villages to towns, but that the scope of future projects would depend on future funding and matters such as existing public rights of way. He added that Flintshire were working with WG and Sustrans on the Active Travel Bill.

Councillor N. Matthews asked how people without cars in villages would get to work. The Highways Strategy Manager in response, said that this would be included in the Regional Transport Plan, in partnership with other organisations.

Councillor H.D. Hutchinson asked why there had been a closure recently on Footpath 2. The Highways Strategy Manager said that forthcoming closures were usually advertised in the local press and would check as to why this had not been publicised.

Councillor W.P. Shotton asked if further car parking spaces would be considered for Talacre. The Economic Development Manager said that officers were working with local businesses and land owners looking at some short term solutions.

Councillor C.A. Thomas urged the Committee not to forget the big impact that small investments could make on rural communities, such as opening up former railway lines. She said the success of projects was reliant upon the communities taking ownership of a project.

Ms. Lowri Owain from Cadywn Clwyd then gave a presentation about projects that had benefited from the Rural Development Plan for Wales.

The Chairman thanked her for the presentation and said that it was good to see projects spread evenly over rural areas.

Councillor Hutchinson asked why Mold was designated a rural area. Ms. Owain explained that Mold was eligible as part of a rural designation. She added that rural counties further west were lobbying for higher funding in their areas. The Economic Development Manager said that Flintshire had to raise awareness in WG that 80% of the county was rural and represented one quarter of the population.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Owain and the Highways Strategy Manager for their presentations.

RESOLVED:

That progress in implementing the Rural Development Plan in Flintshire and the briefing material on European Structural Funds be noted.

76. COMMUNITIES FIRST

The Communities First Programme Manager presented an update on the new Communities First Programme in Flintshire, following Welsh Government (WG) approval of the revised two cluster bid approved by the Cabinet on 12 June 2012.

The Communities First Programme Manager reported that the required changes had been made to the programme and that a larger population would be served with the £1.7 million funding, without any reduction in staffing. One of the

priority areas would be to help young people aged 16-24 not in education, training or employment including through “Academy” models.

Councillor N. Matthews asked about support for areas previously included in Communities First which were no longer included. The Communities First Programme Manager said that exit funding had been applied for in those areas and that the communities had been encouraged to establish local partnerships to look at alternative resources and this had proved successful in the Rural North area.

The Director of Environment said that if Flintshire had not accepted the WG’s position on some of the areas contained within the Council’s original bid and amended proposals accordingly, it would have been likely that the bid would not have been successful.

The Leader of the Council pointed out that Flintshire had to adhere to specific criteria imposed by WG. He added that the WG was about to release Key Performance Indicators for Communities First for the first time.

Councillor V. Gay said that her area had lost out in this project. She expressed concern that the report showed “NONE” under the Equality Impact Category. The Director of Environment said that Councillor Gay was right to raise this issue and that the Equality Impact category should be completed more fully in future in these circumstances.

Councillor P.J. Curtis made a number of observations in support of the comments made by the Communities First Programme Manager and the enabling role undertaken by Communities First in the communities that were no longer within the Communities First areas.

The Chairman thanked the Communities First Programme Manager for the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

77. UPDATE ON NORTH WALES RESIDUAL WASTE TREATMENT PROJECT AND THE SUB-REGIONAL FOOD WASTE PROJECT

The Director of Environment introduced the report and opened the floor to questions.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar asked if the other local authorities signed up to the project would have to pay their share of the financial penalty if the project did not go ahead. The Director of Environment said that he had circulated information about penalties to Members and if Flintshire decided to withdraw from the process, Flintshire County Council would have to pay the sums as set out in the document which was up to around £50 million pounds.

Councillor N. Matthews asked if newsletters could be sent out after Joint Committees had been held. The Director of Environment said it was anticipated that a newsletter would be sent out before the next meeting of this Committee.

Councillor V. Gay asked if there would be an official response to the Friends of the Earth document which had been circulated to some Members. The Director of Environment said that he needed to speak to the Chief Executive in order for the project team to draft a communiqué. He said that this would answer all the relevant questions.

Councillor Matthews asked for a cost comparison to show alternatives to the waste project. The Director of Environment said that this information had previously been circulated. He stressed that something had to be done to avoid £400 per tonne fines if the Council went over its residual waste limit for landfill.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

78. DEESIDE ENTERPRISE ZONE

The Senior Business Advisor introduced the report by saying that the project had just completed its first year of work, with four years remaining. Due to time constraints, the Senior Business Advisor proposed that the floor be opened to questions which was duly agreed by the Committee.

Councillor W.P. Shotton gave thanks for the report and asked if there had been any feedback regarding the recent China trade delegation to Flintshire.

Councillor D. Butler, who was involved in the visit, reported that the Chinese delegation had expressed an interest in coming to Flintshire. They had been particularly impressed by the local aeronautical industries and car industries. The Deeside Enterprise Zone now featured on a Chinese industry web site, a delegation from Flintshire had been invited to the Chinese Embassy in London and the possibility of a twinning arrangement between Flintshire and a Chinese city was being explored.

The Leader of the Council said that the visit proved that Flintshire was open for business to the whole world.

Councillor C. Hinds asked if any businesses had already expressed interest in the Deeside Enterprise Zone. The Senior Business Advisor said that there had been interest from 2-3 businesses and interest in dealing with Chinese industries. She said that she would have follow-up meetings with these organisations.

In response to a question from Councillor N. Matthews, the Senior Business Advisor said that there was interest in exploring what expertise was available locally and doing business with Flintshire. She said that seminars were needed for local businesses to explain further the opportunities involved in trading with China.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

79. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Acting Overview & Scrutiny Manager introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme.

It was proposed that at the meeting on 26 June 2013, a report be received on the Mersey Dee Alliance and that the Planning item be moved to the July meeting. It was also agreed that Energy Switching would be added to the July meeting and that there be a Forward Work Plan workshop in early July.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be updated accordingly.

80. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.20 pm)

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Chairman