

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JUNE 2012

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 Thursday, 21 June 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Matt Wright (Chairman)

Councillors Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, David Evans, Cindy Hinds, Joe Johnson, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor Ian Dunbar (for Ann Minshull)

APOLOGY: Councillor Derek Butler.

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure, Director of Environment,

Head of Streetscene, Head of Planning, Head of Regeneration, Head of Assets and Transportation, and Interim Public Protection Manager for minute number 11

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor P.J. Curtis declared a personal interest on minute number 11 as Chair of Communities First.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May, 2012 had been circulated with the agenda.

Matters arising

The Chairman asked if an update on the 'Fix My Street' website had been provided to Councillor D. Evans. The Head of Streetscene reported that requests from members of the public through the 'Fix My Street' website had been overlooked but this had been resolved and the requests were being progressed.

RESOLVED:

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

10. QUARTER 4 AND YEAR END SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Committee considered the 20011/12 Quarter 4/Year End service performance reports produced at the Head of Service level under the adopted business model of the Council. The draft year end position of the Strategic

Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) and progress made against the Improvement Targets were also contained within the performance reports.

The Heads of Service each gave a short presentation on the performance within each of the service areas, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within each report.

Streetscene

Following the presentation, the Head of Streetscene circulated a timetable for new waste collection operations to the Committee.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin raised concern on the waste collection service within his own ward and the Greenfield ward. He commented on the pilot for Saturday working which he supported in principle but felt that there had been a lack of consultation with local Members and members of the public on how the pilot would be introduced. He said that he had received a number of complaints concerning a letter which had been sent out to residents at Greenfield to clarify a mistake which had been made on the published helpline number as residents were still confused about elements of the waste collection service.

The Head of Streetscene said that officers had recognised that there had been problems following the introduction of the changed waste collection service but all officers were working hard to address issues around missed collections. The Council currently collected waste on a Saturday following bank holidays and had not received any complaints about Saturday working. Consultation with members of the public had been scheduled to take place the week commencing 25 June, 2012 as detailed in the timetable and those Members affected by the pilot Saturday working would be invited to Alltami depot for individual meetings with waste staff to discuss operating arrangements. He confirmed that a letter had been sent to residents as a result of an error but also a door knocking exercise had been carried out to ensure residents were aware of the error. Feedback had been collated on the door knocking exercise and this could be provided to the Committee.

Councillor Dolphin welcomed the opportunity to see the feedback as he had concerns on areas where door knocking had not been carried out. He said that he did not blame the Cabinet Members for the problems with the waste collection service but felt that the blame lay with the Head of Streetscene.

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling said that the pilot for Saturday working had previously been agreed by Members with a view to potentially rolling out Saturday working once the pilot had been reviewed. The three areas identified for the pilot had been chosen because of their close proximity to one another to enable staff to lend support to each other if necessary.

In response to comments on the accessibility of streets on a Saturday morning, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling reported that scatter rounds had been introduced to enhance capacity within the service and enable household waste, food waste and recyclable items to be

collected from areas across the County where the larger vehicles would not be able to access.

In response to questions on scatter rounds, the Head of Streetscene explained that following the meeting he would e-mail all Members to seek their views on whether there were areas within their wards which they felt should be added to the scatter rounds.

Councillor C.A. Thomas commented on the improvements that had been made within the waste collection service but raised concern around the changes to how reports of broken street lights were dealt with. She asked for clarification on the process asked whether it would be possible to conduct a lean review on the street lighting service. She also asked if the Council would continue to provide multi-use bins across the County.

The Head of Streetscene clarified the process for dealing with reports of broken street lights and offered for the Committee to visit the call centre to see how queries were being dealt with. He also confirmed that the Council continued to provide multi-use bins where appropriate. The Committee supported the invitation to visit the call centre.

In response to a question on presentations to Town and Community Councils, the Head of Streetscene confirmed that a programme had been devised for supervisors to visit Town and Community Council meetings in order to discuss any areas of concern and arrange regular update meetings. He said that he would confirm with Councillor I. Dunbar when a visit would be made to Connah's Quay Town Council.

In response to concerns raised on consultations with local Members on highway improvement works and the condition of the road surface at the precinct at Connah's Quay, the Head of Streetscene said that he would take up these matters and report back to Members following the meeting.

Councillor P. Shotton thanked the Head of Streetscene for the report and the list of re-surfacing works which he said had assisted him in dealing with concerns from residents within his ward. He asked if the food collections figures could be provided to the Committee and also how the waste collection vehicles were maintained.

The Head of Streetscene advised that he would confirm the food collection figures with the Committee following the meeting. He also reported that waste collection vehicles currently under warranty were taken back to the company and repaired at no additional cost. All other vehicles were maintained by the Councils own workforce.

In response to a question on public conveniences, the Cabinet Member for Environment reported that a report on public conveniences and car parking charges would be submitted to the Cabinet in due course. He also referred to Councillor Dolphin's earlier comments and asked him to withdraw his comment in relation to the Head of Streetscene.

Councillor Dolphin said that he did not have any confidence in the proposed changes to the waste collection service and said that the responsibility of the service lay with the Head of Streetscene.

Planning

Councillor C.A. Thomas suggested that the experience of the Countryside Service in obtaining grant funding could be used across all departments as best practice. She commented on the conditions attached to granted planning permissions which she felt needed greater enforcement and the need for better liaison between Planning and Education in relation to Section 106 Agreements. She also asked whether Town and Community Councils would be consulted on the Local Development Plan (LDP).

The Head of Planning supported the suggestion of sharing the experience of the Countryside Service across all departments. He said that he was confident that improvements had been made within Enforcement and further improvements were planned to improve links between Planning and Education. Consultation on the LDP would be undertaken with Members in the autumn followed by consultation with Town and Community Council members later in the year. It was hoped that Planning Aid Wales would facilitate the consultation process on behalf of the Council. A report on Section 106 Agreements would be presented to County Council on 17 July, 2012.

Councillor D. Evans commented on the condition of the previous headquarters building at British Steel and asked whether the Council could contact the owners to ensure that the building was protected. He also asked if issues on the cycle path between Connah's Quay and Flint would be addressed given that this was the final year of available funding.

The Head of Planning reported that officers had been actively meeting with the owners of the headquarters building and it was hoped that issues would be resolved over the next couple of months. The Countryside Service would continue to submit applications for external grant funding and any works on the cycle path could be picked up by the Environmental Directorate.

In response to comments on the Aggregates Levy Fund for Wales, the Head of Planning advised that he did not feel the fund was at risk of being withdrawn and advised Members to contact him if they wanted further information on how to access this fund.

Councillor I. Dunbar sought clarification on the Heritage Lottery Fund works for Wepre Park and also how the time taken to complete minor planning applications could be reduced.

The Head of Planning confirmed that the Council had received Phase 1 of the Heritage Lottery Fund with bids currently being prepared for Phase 2. He said that he would speak to Councillor Dunbar on this issue following the meeting. On minor planning applications, the Council had been meeting its target and he felt that negotiations between the planning officer and applicant during the application process reduced the need for the application to be refused and another application to be submitted at a later date. A customer survey would be

carried out in due course and the feedback received could be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

Public Protection

The Chairman asked that the Committee be kept up to date on the recruitment of staff to fill current vacancies.

Councillor D. Evans raised concern on Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences which he did not feel was enough of a deterrent. He commented on the issues of dog fouling along the Shotton railway line which should be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to improve the access to the Northern Gateway.

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Waste and Recycling said that future dog fouling enforcement would be carried out by the Council's own enforcement team with 'hot spot' areas being given priority. Also the enforcement team would be encouraged to liaise with the Countryside Service to address any areas of concern on the coastal path.

Regeneration

Councillor P.J. Curtis raised concern on the condition of Holywell Leisure Centre which he felt should be addressed as a matter of urgency. He also raised concern on the vacant premises within Holywell high street and the car parking charges which he felt should be taken away to increase visitor numbers to the town centre.

The Cabinet Member for Environment gave a commitment that he would be seeking an urgent review of all car parking charges throughout the County. The outcome of the review would be reported to the Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

Councillor I. Dunbar welcomed the new Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ) but sought assurance that this would not disadvantage neighbouring smaller town centres in the future. Councillor D. Evans raised concern that the Town Partnership meetings in Shotton had not been held for around six months and asked when the meetings would start again.

The Head of Regeneration confirmed that a greater joined up approach between all interested groups was being progressed to enable more effective Town Partnership meetings. He said that he would provide Councillor Evans with further information on future meetings following the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure confirmed that he would visit Holywell Leisure Centre to assess what improvements could be made, and would inform Councillor Curtis when this visit would be taking place. He said that the report was a positive one and looked forward to the opportunities that would arise through the DEZ.

Assets and Transportation

In response to a question on the Biomass boiler at Whitford Primary School, the Head of Assets and Transportation explained that the use of Biomass boilers would be considered for areas where there were no gas mains. The effectiveness of the boiler would be monitored to inform future strategies and determine whether these installations should be installed elsewhere.

Councillor I. Dunbar commended the work on the new Connah's Quay Primary School which he said would be a great asset to Connah's Quay. He also welcomed the creation of the new half width bus bays in Shotton which he commented had alleviated some of the traffic problems and asked if the traffic lights in Shotton would be synchronised in the future. Councillor D. Evans also thanked the Head of Assets and Transportation for the bus bays in Shotton. He also commented on Civil Parking Enforcement and asked if streets where yellow lines were not deemed fit for purpose would be taken off the parking enforcement list.

The Head of Assets and Transportation thanked Members for their comments on the new Connah's Quay Primary School and bus bays in Shotton which he said would be passed on to officers. Work had been progressing on upgrading some of the older traffic lights to enable all lights from Queensferry to Connah's Quay to be synchronised. On Civil Parking Enforcement careful consideration would need to take place around streets that were not deemed fit for purpose.

Councillor C.J. Dolphin asked if figures on the efficiency of the Biomass boiler were available which he felt would be of interest to residents of Whitford. He asked how the Civic Parking Enforcement would impact upon car parking charges in Holywell and also whether the speed limits on rural roads would be changed as a result of the Speed Limit Review.

The Head of Assets and Transportation said that he would provide Councillor Dolphin with the efficiency figures following the meeting. He explained that as part of the civil parking enforcement there would be a review of all car parking charges and that changes to speed limits would need to be prioritised following the outcome of the Speed Limit Review.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for their attendance and for answering the questions from Members.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator collate the comments made by Members and forward them to the Performance Unit and Directorate.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the development of the Committees Forward Work Programme would be completed at the Workshop which had been scheduled for 3 July, 2012. The Committee also agreed that the Service Improvement Action Plan for Waste would be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 12 September, 2012.

The Facilitator said that she would liaise with the Chairman, Director of Environment and Head of Assets and Transportation on when the Speed Limit Review would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the development of the Forward Work Programme be completed at the Workshop scheduled for 3 July, 2012.

12. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting began at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.12 p.m.

13. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There was one member of the public and one member of the press present.

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Chairman