

COMMUNITY PROFILE & PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 APRIL 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Profile & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Monday, 28 April 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Brian Dunn (Chairman)

Councillors Ron Davies, Glenys Diskin, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Brian Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton, and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor Ray Hughes for David Williams

APOLOGIES: Councillor Ian Smith.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Christine Jones and David Wisinger

CONTRIBUTORS: (For minute No. 50) Chief Executive, and the Policy and Performance Manager. (For minute No. 45) Mrs. Ann Steele-Mortimer, Clwyd Special Riding Centre. (For minute No.49) Mrs. Non Tudur Williams, Senior Stakeholder Manager, and Mrs. Sue Whittall, Area Manager, Post Office Limited.

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

43. DECLARATIONS ON INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer declared a personal interest in the following item due to a presentation being given by his wife on behalf of the Centre.

Agenda Item 4 – Clwyd Special Riding Centre

Councillor Chris Dolphin declared a personal interest in the following item due to the close family association of an individual who was a postmaster in a sub post office.

Agenda Item 5 - Post Office Modernisation.

Councillor Brian Dunn declared a personal interest in the following item as he was the owner of a sub Post Office.

Agenda Item 5 - Post Office Modernisation

Councillor Glenys Diskin declared a declared a personal interest in the following item as she was a Subpostmaster of a local Post Office.

Councillors Brian Dunn, Ian Dunbar, Mike Reece, and Paul Shotton declared a personal interest in the following agenda item as they were Members of the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

Agenda Item 6 – Single Integrated Plan

44. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2014, were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

45. CLWYD SPECIAL RIDING CENTRE

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Mrs. Ann Steele-Mortimer, a Trustee of the Clwyd Special Riding Centre, and invited her to give a presentation on behalf of the Centre.

Mrs. Steele-Mortimer provided background information and gave an overview of the aims, objectives and benefits of the Clwyd Special Riding Centre. She advised that the Centre aimed to provide people with additional needs the opportunity to ride, carriage drive or equestrian vault to benefit their health and well being. Mrs. Steele-Mortimer showed a short film which gave further background to the aims and workings of the Centre.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Steele-Mortimer for an informative presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Shotton, Mrs. Steele-Mortimer explained that the Centre currently had 23 horses and the vast majority were part sponsored. She commented on the costs of running the Centre which had no regular income or grants and was dependent on fundraising and donations to continue.

In answer to a further query from Councillor Chris Dolphin, Mrs. Steele-Mortimer reported that member Groups of the riding for the Disabled Association visited the Centre from throughout the UK and the Centre's holiday accommodation was fully booked from March until the end of October.

Councillor Ray Hughes expressed his thanks for the outstanding work undertaken by the Clwyd Special Riding Centre and proposed that a visit to the Centre be arranged for the Committee at a future date.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Steele-Mortimer for her responses to Members' questions and reiterated the appreciation expressed by Councillor Hughes, on behalf of the Committee, for the work undertaken by the Centre.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be noted; and
- (b) That a visit to the Clwyd Special Riding Centre be arranged for the Committee.

46. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman indicated that there would be a change in the order of the agenda and the item on the Forward Work Programme would be brought forward.

47. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. He drew attention to the change in time of the meetings of the Committee scheduled to be held on 9 June 2014 and 24 July 2014.

Members considered the Forward Work Programme and it was agreed that the Local Service Board and Strategic Partnerships end of year report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 June 2014.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

48. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE ITEM ON POST OFFICE MODERNISATION

Councillor Brian Dunn advised that he would vacate the Chair while he raised a number of concerns around the following item on Post Office Modernisation. In the absence of the Vice-Chairman, nominations were sought for a chairman for the meeting during consideration of the item.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ron Hampson be appointed Chairman for the meeting during consideration of the item on Post Office Modernisation.

49. POST OFFICE MODERNISATION

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Mrs. Non Tudur Williams, Senior Stakeholder Manager, and Mrs. Sue Whittall, Area Manager, and invited them to give a presentation on the Post Office modernisation.

Mrs. Williams provided background information and context and gave a presentation on the Post Office Strategy 2020. The main points of the presentation were:

- Securing the Future
- Transforming the Post Office to serve the changing needs of customers
- Government funding agreed to complete modernisation programme by 2018
- Commitment to maintain the branch network at around its current size of c11500
- Commitment to stay at the heart of local communities and support local businesses
- Making it easier for customers to access Post Office services when convenient for them

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Williams for an informative presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Brian Dunn referred to the changes to contracts by the Post Office concerning how Subpostmasters received an income and commented on the removal of subsidies and quarterly payments and the introduction of payments for transactions only.

During discussion Members raised a number of further concerns and referred to the issue of customer and staff security specifically in relation to the new open-plan counters and extended opening hours.

The Chairman invited Councillor Christine Jones, who was not a member of the Committee, to speak at the meeting. Councillor Jones outlined the dissatisfaction which had been expressed by residents of her Ward concerning the changes which had been made to their local branch. She explained that she had detailed her concerns on the proposed changes in the customer engagement process but felt that these had been ignored.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed apprehension that there could be a decline in the number of post office branches in local communities if they were deemed to no longer be a viable business concern as a result of the transformation changes.

Mrs. Williams acknowledged the concerns raised and reported on the significant investment being made to modernise and maintain the Post Office branch network to serve the changing needs of customers for the future. She gave an assurance that there was no programme of enforced branch closures and that the Post Office was committed to remaining at the heart of local communities and supporting local businesses. She cited the recent opening of the Post Office facility at the Blue Bell in Halkyn and ongoing discussions concerning service provision at Mynydd Isa, as local examples. She continued that there was a demand for extending the current hours of business to enable customers to access services at a time which was convenient to them.

In response to the concerns raised around matters of security, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Whittall advised that the safety and security of staff and customers was a key priority and any issues raised would be given utmost consideration. She referred to the widespread consultation which had been undertaken with stakeholders on the transformation of the network of Post Offices and commented on the benefits of modernisation in terms of increased customer satisfaction, rise in retail sales, and greater efficiencies in staffing and retail space.

Members were advised that income for subpostmasters, operating a new-style Main model branch would be protected for a period of three years. The Post Office was committed to maintaining the branch network at around its current size and to support community and outreach branches which were a focal point for local life which had no other suitable retailer nearby. Subpostmasters who wished to convert their branch would receive funding from the Post Office and would receive compensation if they wished to leave their business.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Non Williams and Mrs. Sue Whittall for their detailed responses to Members questions.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

50. SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN

Councillor Brian Dunn returned to the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Chief Executive presented the Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 (SIP) of the Local Service Board. He provided background information and referred to the four priorities of the Local Service Board which each had detailed programme plans, governance and reporting arrangements. He advised that the Single Integrated Plan combined these commitments and activities into one plan. Flintshire's SIP was formally adopted by the Local Service Board on 3 April 2014 and subsequently endorsed at a meeting of the Cabinet on 15 April 2014.

The Policy and Performance Manager gave an overview of the four initial priorities and sub priorities which were detailed in the Flintshire SIP 2013-2017 which was distributed during the meeting. She explained that the priorities had been chosen as those which could add most value and make a positive and lasting difference. During the lifetime of the SIP the in year priorities would be revisited and adapted according to need and circumstances.

During discussion the Chief Executive and the Policy and Performance Manager responded to the comments and queries raised by Members. Councillor Chris Dolphin referred to the support provided for residents from within Community First areas and commented on the need for support in other areas where there may be deprivation.

RESOLVED:

That the commitments in the Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 be noted and the delivery of outcomes both as a partner to the Local Service Board and through the Council's Improvement and other principal plans be supported.

51. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.25 p.m.)

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Chairman