

COMMUNITY PROFILE & PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 NOVEMBER 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, 17 November 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Brian Dunn (Chairman)

Councillors Paul Cunningham, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Robin Guest, Ron Hampson, Joe Johnson, Brian Lloyd (Vice-Chairman), Dave Mackie, David Roney, Paul Shotton and Ian Smith

APOLOGIES: Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer.

ALSO PRESENT: Alwen Davies, North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority

CONTRIBUTORS: Chief Executive. (For minute no.29) Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies, Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and Mr Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer. (For minute no.32) Dr. David Skydmore, Campus Leader, Glyndwr University, Northop

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

27. DECLARATIONS ON INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillors Brian Dunn, Ian Dunbar and Paul Shotton declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 on the presentation by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service as members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2014, were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

29. PRESENTATION BY NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies, Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, and Mr Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer, and invited them to give a presentation on the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the continuing demand for services. . He provided information in his presentation on the outcomes for Flintshire, prevention costs, and the consequences of maintaining a frozen budget. He

explained that not increasing the revenue budget by the required amount during the next 5 years would require significant reductions to preventative and responsive services. The Chief Fire Officer also reported on the impact of major reductions in Government grant funding for community safety which would impact in projects such as the Phoenix Project.

The Chief Fire Officer expanded on the public consultation being undertaken on the level of fire and rescue services provided in North Wales in 2015-16 and beyond. He explained that the consultation was about whether or not to reduce the amount of fire and rescue cover in North Wales. He advised that a reduction in the size of the Service would avoid increasing the County Council's financial contributions but would mean reducing the number of fire stations, fire engines, and fire and rescue service operators. He referred to the three options presented in the consultation document and the impact of each, and advised that the consultation would close on 9 January 2015.

The Chief Executive advised that a special meeting of the Fire Authority was to be held during the beginning of December 2014 to make a recommendation on the budget to the next ordinary meeting of the Fire Authority later in December 2014.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Smith for his presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Paul Cunningham asked if the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority had considered creating a single Fire and Rescue Service as was the case in Scotland. He also asked if the Service had any assets which could be realised to improve the funding situation, or any resources in reserve that could be utilised. Councillor Cunningham also expressed disappointment around the reduction in grant funding for the Phoenix Project.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that grant funding for the Phoenix Project had been reduced on an all Wales basis. He said he was working with officers in the other two Fire and Rescue Services and the Welsh Government to see what could be done to minimise the impact of reduced funding and to seek alternative measures for the Phoenix Project.

Referring to the question concerning a merger of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in North Wales, the Chief Fire Officer said that this would be a matter for the Welsh Government to consider. He said that the Authorities in North Wales had never supported the concept of a merger because of concerns around funding. He also commented that it was too soon to evaluate the impact of the single service which had been created in Scotland a year ago. In response to the further questions from Councillor Cunningham around the sale of assets and use of reserves, the Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service did not have a significant amount of assets or reserves that it could utilise. He commented on the rental of buildings and the opportunities to downsize which had already been undertaken.

During discussion Members spoke in support of the Phoenix Project and expressed a number of concerns around the impact of reduced funding and continuation of the service. Councillor Cunningham proposed that the Committee

be notified of future Phoenix Project presentations at Mold Fire Station, as they may wish to attend and show their support for this worthwhile initiative

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed concerns around any potential reduced funding to the Fire & Rescue Service in future years. He commented that the Fire & Rescue Service provided excellent value for money and referred to the valuable community services provided, citing the fire and safety checks for the elderly and student population as an example.

The Chief Executive advised that the consultation of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was to be considered at the meeting of the County Council to be held on 25 November 2014. He also commented on the opportunity for Members to make individual input through the consultation process.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies and Mr. Simon Smith, for their detailed and informative responses to Members' questions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies and Mr. Simon Smith be thanked for their presentation; and
- (b) That arrangements be made for Members of the Committee to be notified of future Phoenix Project presentations at Mold Fire Station, as they may wish to attend and show their support for this worthwhile initiative

30. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman indicated that there would be a slight change in the order of business to bring forward agenda item 6 to facilitate Dr. David Skydmore to be present for the item on Glyndwr University.

31. COMMUNITY PROFILE & PARTNERSHIPS FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. He confirmed that a representative of the Samaritans would be in attendance at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 18 December 2014, to give a presentation on the work of the Samaritans. He asked Members to note the date and time of the meeting.

Members considered the Forward Work Programme and it was agreed that an update on Anti-social behaviour would also be considered at the next meeting.

Councillor Dave Mackie raised concerns around the postal arrangements used by Central Despatch for sending correspondence to Members. The Member Engagement Manager agreed to look into the Royal Mail franking of a Flintshire County Council 'One Post' envelope and provide a response.

The Chairman asked that an item on Community Asset transfer be included on the Forward Work Programme for future consideration. The Chief Executive provided background information and advised Members to contact the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) if they had any specific issues they wished to raise. He also agreed to circulate further information on this matter to Members. Councillor Robin Guest suggested that an all Member workshop be arranged for Members on the matter. It was agreed that arrangements would be made for Members to receive a presentation on Community Asset Transfers in due course

During discussion it was also agreed that items on the proposed build of a Roman Fortress at Hope, and on solar panel 'farms' be added for consideration at future meetings of the Committee.

The Member Engagement Manager drew attention to the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 2 February 2015, and reminded Members that it had been decided that the meeting would be held as a Joint meeting with the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the attendance of David Jones, Principal, Coleg Cambria.

The Member Engagement Manager invited Members to forward any suggestions for topics they may wish to be included in the Forward Work Programme to the Vice-Chair or himself.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed; and
- (b) That arrangements be made for Members to receive a presentation on Community Asset Transfers in due course.

32. UPDATE PRESENTATION FROM GLYNDWR UNIVERSITY.

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Dr. David Skydmore, Campus Leader, Glyndwr University, Northop, to the meeting and invited him to give a presentation on Glyndwr University – Flintshire.

Dr. Skydmore provided background information and advised that Glyndwr University, Flintshire, was a centre for higher education and rural research in Flintshire and provided community use and involvement. He referred to the facilities at the Welsh College of Horticulture, Celyn College, and the Glyndwr University campuses in Northop Rural Centre and Broughton – Airbus. He also advised that there was a reciprocal agreement with Gladstone Library, Hawarden, to provide theology and well-being research.

Dr. Skydmore outlined the aims of the University which included access to higher education, continuing professional development, higher apprenticeships, technical consultancy, market intelligence and data, and innovation support. He also commented on the future vision for the Flintshire campus to develop and increase the sustainability of communities and the environment and to add significantly to the quality of life and well-being.

The Chairman thanked Dr. Skydmore for his presentation and invited Members to raise questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Joe Johnson regarding the higher apprenticeship scheme, Dr. Skydmore explained that the higher apprenticeship courses provided excellent opportunities for young people to develop their vocational skills to meet the demands of business and industry. The Higher Apprenticeship scheme was also successful in securing employment for young people and offered an alternative to the financial and personal pressures of University studies.

Councillor Ian Smith referred to the land management activities and the development of the Llys Edwin – Royal Palace of North Wales site. Dr. Skydmore explained that the aim was to develop the site to provide access to archaeological groups.

During discussion Dr. Skydmore responded to the further questions raised by Members around the opportunities for supporting local industry and businesses in terms of apprenticeships and collaboration with the Council's services. Dr. Skydmore explained that the intention was to meet the needs of the local community and the wider community across Wales.

Councillor Robin Guest asked if a shared site and facilities with Coleg Cambria at the Northop campus had given rise to any difficulties. Dr. Skydmore explained that Glyndwr enjoyed a good working relationship with Coleg Cambria. Each organisation had its own distinct land and facilities and a business arrangement was in place to cover the cost of resources used. He advised that both organisations aimed to ensure that students who left further education had the opportunity to progress into higher education to fulfil their potential.

In response to a further question from Councillor Guest concerning liaison with 6th Form students in Flintshire Secondary Schools, Dr. Skydmore reported that a regular series of events, including "Open" days, were held where Glyndwr met and talked to 6th Form students about the courses on offer and their options.

The Chief Executive asked Dr. Skydmore if Glyndwr University had any plans for investment and expansion at the Northop Campus. Dr. Skydmore replied that it was intended to expand the environmental laboratories including advanced glasshouse facilities, extend classrooms, develop a rural business centre for Flintshire, increase outdoor pursuit and heritage interpretation facilities involving the community, and to continue the enhancement of the biodiversity and habitat range. Dr. Skydmore advised that investment funds were not guaranteed.

RESOLVED:

That Dr. David Skydmore be thanked for his presentation.

33. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.35 am)

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Chairman