

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 OCTOBER 2014

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 22 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Amanda Bragg, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Brian Dunn, David Evans, Jim Falshaw, Veronica Gay, Robin Guest, Alison Halford, Ron Hampson, Cindy Hinds, Dennis Hutchinson, Hilary Isherwood, Joe Johnson, Christine Jones, Kevin Jones, Richard Jones, Stella Jones, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Hilary McGuill, Ann Minshull, Tim Newhouse, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts, Ian Roberts, David Roney, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, Sharon Williams, David Wisinger, Arnold Woolley and Matt Wright

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Alan Diskin, Glenys Diskin, Rosetta Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, George Hardcastle, Rita Johnson, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Billy Mullin, Neville Phillips, Tony Sharps and David Williams
Chief Executive

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Chief Officer (Education & Youth), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Chief Officer (Social Services), Policy & Performance Manager, Democracy & Governance Manager, Member Engagement Manager, Performance Team Leader and Committee Officer

50. PRESENTATIONS

The Chief Officer (Governance) welcomed Steven Reynolds and Shelley Webber from the Council's Domestic Energy Team within the Housing Regeneration and Strategy Team. He praised the team for their achievement as finalists in the 'Best Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative' category of the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) annual service awards 2014. The Domestic Energy Team had been one of seven shortlisted entries out of 375 nominations across the UK and had delivered energy efficiency measures to 28% of properties in Flintshire to date.

As Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Helen Brown congratulated the team on their success and for securing around £8m of funding for energy efficiency measures to help Flintshire residents.

A second presentation was made to acknowledge the Special Recognition Award given to Read Construction for innovation at the Constructing Excellence

Wales annual awards 2014. The award had been given in recognition of the delivery of innovative solutions and sharing knowledge on work completed on the new £6.4m primary school complex in Shotton, Ysgol Tŷ Ffynnon, which was funded jointly by the Council and the Welsh Government. In attendance were Mr Richard Heaton, Managing Director of Read Construction; Helen Hughes, Headteacher of Ysgol Tŷ Ffynnon; John Donelley, Chair of Governors; together with the Council's Project Architect David Friend and Capital Projects & Planning Manager, Paula Vogt.

As Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure, Councillor Kevin Jones offered his congratulations to all involved in the project and cited this as a good example of partnership working by the Council. Tributes were paid by Members to the Headteacher, staff and Board of Governors.

Councillor Ron Davies commended Clwyd Theatr Cymru which had been nominated in the category of My Theatre Matters, UK's Most Welcoming Theatre at the UK Theatre Awards in London. Although unsuccessful, he felt it was important to recognise the achievement as one of only five nominees in the UK.

51. COUNCIL MINUTES

The draft minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 24 September 2014 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

On behalf of Councillor David Williams, Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked that his attendance be recorded at the meeting on 24 September 2014.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above amendment, both sets of minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that a personal interest would be recorded for all Members on Agenda Item 11 - Draft Annual Report 2015/16 of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

53. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

A copy of the Chair's communications had been circulated to all Members before the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman asked that the good wishes of all Council Members be conveyed to the Chair.

54. PETITIONS

Councillors Mike Peers and Ron Hampson submitted a petition from residents in Buckley declaring no confidence in the delivery of bus services by GHA Coaches in the area due to concerns around inconsistency.

55. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that none had been received.

56. QUESTIONS

The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that none had been received.

57. NOTICE OF MOTION

In line with Council Procedure Rule 21.2, the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Clive Carver to the previous meeting and seconded by Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer, had been adjourned for discussion at this meeting:-

“The Council’s Constitution to have an additional Council Procedure Rule so that when a Member has declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest relating to an agenda item and subsequently leaves the Council Chamber or Committee Room for the debate and vote, then when the Member returns to the meeting room, the Chair of that meeting will repeat the decision of that agenda item so that the Member who declared the Personal and Prejudicial Interest will be made aware of the decision. There will be no comment or discussion when the Chair repeats the decision.”

Councillor Carver explained the background to the Notice of Motion which, if agreed, would ensure that all Members at a meeting would be aware of the decisions made thus avoiding the need to pursue a response elsewhere. The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that following a slight amendment to the original Notice of Motion, there were no procedural difficulties under the Code of Conduct if the Council chose to adopt it.

In response to a query by Councillor Chris Bithell on whether there was a need for the Motion, the Chief Officer (Governance) said that, if agreed, the change in procedure would show transparency and avoid any potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

As Chairman of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committees, Councillor Robin Guest spoke in support of the Motion. On being put to the vote, Councillor Bernie Attridge wished it to be noted that he had abstained.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

58. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced the draft Annual Performance Report 2013/14 seeking approval for publication prior to the statutory deadline, to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure). He thanked the Policy & Performance Manager and her team for the level of work involved in collating and preparing the report whilst stressing the importance of its contents.

The Policy & Performance Manager thanked the Performance Team Leader for her contribution to the report and delivered a presentation on the key points. Whilst the report detailed performance in achieving the Council's improvement priorities, it also gave a balanced view to reinforce success and highlight areas for improvement. 'Good' and 'satisfactory' levels of progress had been made on the eight priorities in the Council's Improvement Plan 2013/14, with 'high' and 'medium' confidence levels on achieving outcomes. Where there were borderline levels, the view had been taken to allocate the lower level status so that improvement could be sought in that area. A revised page 43 of the Annual Performance Report was circulated for the sub-priority 'Modernised and High Performing Education' which reported an improvement in the percentage of learners achieving GCSE Grade C or above in English (72.7%) from the previous year. During the presentation, Members were reminded of the importance in recognising that performance indicators were only part of the whole picture.

A summary of overall performance stated that 65% of improvement targets had been met or exceeded whilst the majority of the remainder had missed by an acceptable margin. National rankings indicated that Flintshire had performed better than the Welsh average in 51% of indicators and was ranked top in six indicators and bottom in one. In comparison to 2012/13, overall quartile performance had declined slightly, however 61% of Flintshire residents surveyed said that the Council provided high quality services, which was above the national average percentage.

Following endorsement of the Annual Performance Report by Cabinet on 15 October 2015, approval was sought from Council to publish within the statutory deadline of 31 October. The Wales Audit Office would subsequently issue a Certificate of Compliance based on the published report which it was hoped would be equally as positive as the Certificate received earlier in the year.

In moving the recommendation in the report, Councillor Aaron Shotton thanked the team for facilitating the report and spoke of the combined effort by different departments in collating information and scrutiny by Members of the quarterly updates. He referred to the areas of achievement noted in the presentation which were equally as important as those areas not currently meeting the Council's ambitions and which required a greater level of emphasis. He went on to refer to the financial pressures ahead for all Councils in this time of austerity and the challenges for public services.

On the list of highlights in the Executive Summary, Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer congratulated the Chief Officer and Cabinet Member for achievements on Skills and Learning. When asked about plans for the 21st Century School Programme, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) said that a statement had been made publicly available stating the reasons for a pause in the review on the John Summers High School capital project to allow further work on verifying data to establish whether there was a resilient business case for Welsh Government funding approval.

In drawing attention to other highlights, Members paid tribute to successful outcomes on the Llys Jasmine extra care scheme and the promotion of Deeside Industrial Park.

Councillor Richard Jones commented on the need for future targets to remain at the same level or higher to ensure improved outcomes.

In response, Councillor Chris Bithell said that discussions with the Chief Officer on some of the more challenging education targets had resulted in agreement that high aspirations were needed. He reiterated that Flintshire had achieved the highest overall satisfaction rate with education by a Council in 2013/14 and had been ranked the highest in Wales on the percentage of pupils who had achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A-C in English/Welsh (as a first language) and Maths.

In welcoming the establishment of North East Wales Homes, Councillor Mike Peers asked which other 'key areas' of the county would benefit from the development of new homes and felt that all areas should be included. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) explained that subsequent to the production of the report, agreement had been reached by Cabinet on a range of sites, however this list was not exhaustive. Cabinet approval had been granted on the procurement exercise and affordable housing range of sites funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Council Fund.

Councillor Helen Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing, referred to a recent report submitted to the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and a workshop planned to consult with all Members on the provision of new homes and outcomes from the garage site review.

In response to comments from Councillor Peers on conflicting statements in the report on progression with the Town Centre capital programme, the Chief Officer said that this was reflective of the approaching end of the European Regional Development funding programme and the future challenge to fund different projects which had been in place previously.

Councillor Robin Guest thanked all those who had undertaken the work resulting in the performance achieved and suggested alternative wording for missed targets on the performance overview.

During discussion on food waste recycling, Members commented on the availability of waste bags for residents. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that the reduction in the tonnage of food waste recycling was replicated across the country and was felt to be due to a greater level of awareness of food wasted by households. He added that food waste bags were issued to residents on request, with a regular stock maintained on the refuse vehicles.

Councillor Kevin Jones, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection & Leisure, spoke of the need for meaningful targets to be set that the Council could aspire to achieve. He went on to refer to a change in the approach to food waste and encouraging residents to continue with this.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas reiterated concerns that she had raised at other meetings on the repairs and maintenance backlog of schools.

Councillor Hilary McGuill drew attention to the list of implemented collaboration projects and asked how these would be progressed in the event of a merger with a neighbouring Council.

Councillor Aaron Shotton said that the stance taken by Wrexham County Borough Council on the prospect of an early voluntary merger was respected and that there was a need to continue with shared services. He said that Flintshire should be proud of its ambitions in rising to the challenge of providing affordable housing and Council homes and had recognised the need for affordable housing in rural areas.

RESOLVED:

That the 2013/14 Annual Performance Report be approved for publication.

59. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 OF THE IRPW

The Democracy & Governance Manager presented the report for the Council to determine its response to consultation on the draft annual report 2015/16 of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. Copies of the draft report had been made available to Members prior to the meeting and the Council's response was to be forwarded to the IRPW by 27 November 2014 to enable the final version to be issued.

The Democracy & Governance Manager summarised the changes proposed by IRPW, as indicated in the report, and highlighted the procedure in place for additional 'senior salaries' to be sought by Councils if they wished. Concerns within the IRPW report around inconsistent support available to Members across Wales had been addressed in Flintshire by the rollout of iPads which would also achieve savings on the despatch of agenda papers.

On a technical point on paragraph 3.26 of the draft report, it was clarified that the legislation for no tax liability on travel expenses paid to Members had not yet been introduced by the UK Government.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the points made in paragraphs 3.01 and 3.05 of the report be included in the response to the consultation on the draft report; and
- (b) That the procedure in paragraph 3.03 of the report be noted.

60. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Member Engagement Manager presented the draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for the 2013/14 municipal year for approval, following agreement by the Constitution Committee on 15 October 2014.

In moving the recommendation in the report, Councillor Robin Guest, Chairman of the Constitution Committee, thanked the Member Engagement Manager and his team for their hard work in supporting Members to ensure the

effectiveness of the Overview & Scrutiny function. This was seconded by Councillor Ron Hampson who paid tribute to the Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

As a point of accuracy, Councillor Gareth Roberts referred to the committee memberships listed in the report and advised that he was not a member of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report be approved.

61. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.25 pm)

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Chair