

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 MARCH 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 16th March, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)

Councillors: David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Jim Falshaw, George Hardcastle, Brian Lloyd, Sara Parker, Mike Reece and Gareth Roberts

APOLOGY : Councillor Ray Hughes

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Aaron Shotton (Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Derek Butler (Cabinet Member for Housing), Councillor Helen Brown (Cabinet Member for Housing), Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Service Manager Enterprise and Regeneration Programmes, Service Manager Council Housing Services, Services Manager Customer Support, and Service Manager Housing Programmes

IN ATTENDANCE:

Community & Enterprise and Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

79. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 December 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters arising

Councillor Mike Reece asked for an update on the installation of solar panels in Council properties in Flintshire. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) explained that it was intended to expand the scheme across the County, subject to funding, however, priority had been given to properties which would achieve the most benefit in the first instance.

- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 February 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters arising

In response to a query from Councillor George Hardcastle the Services Manager Customer Support gave an update on developments concerning provision for males fleeing domestic abuse across the North Wales region.

RESOLVED:

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

80. REGIONAL ECONOMY

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) introduced a report on progress at local, regional and sub-regional level to grow the economy and increase prosperity for Flintshire. She gave an overview of the report and referred to the main considerations concerning the Economic Ambition Board, Mersey Dee Alliance, LEP Growth Bid, and Northern Powerhouse. The Chief Officer advised that work would continue towards developing a role and influence in both LEP and Northern Powerhouse and to work collaboratively across North Wales to achieve mutually beneficial economic growth.

Councillors Aaron Shotton and Derek Butler, commented on the real opportunities and significant risks if Flintshire was not a part of the Mersey Dee spatial element of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise growth proposal. Councillor Shotton emphasised the need to lobby the case with the Welsh Government (WG) for Flintshire to have parity powers and commented on the need to support the work to influence and develop; the contribution North Wales can make to the Northern Powerhouse. Councillor Shotton suggested that the Committee continued to develop its forward work programme and receive an update on the Economic Ambition Board at a future meeting.

Councillor Paul Cunningham commented on the concerns which had been raised during a recent meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the range of languages being offered in schools and the Post 16 Education Centre, and said this could have an impact on Flintshire's future development in relation to attracting business to the Deeside Enterprise Zone.

Councillor Peter Curtis raised concerns around local regeneration and commented on the need to ensure sustainability of small towns in the long term. It was suggested that a report on 'Town Centre Regeneration' be added to the forward work programme to be submitted to a future meeting.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin raised further concerns around the need for good transport infrastructure and connectivity.

Councillor Mike Reece proposed that a letter be sent to the WG on behalf of the Committee outlining the need for a Member of the Council to be appointed to the Deeside Enterprise Zone Board.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the ongoing work to ensure that Flintshire can both, continue to and gain from the Mersey Dee spatial part of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise growth proposal, be supported;
- (b) That the work to influence and develop the contribution North Wales can make to the Northern Powerhouse, be supported; and
- (c) That a letter be written to the Welsh Government outlining the Committee's support for a Member of Flintshire County Council to be appointed to the Deeside Enterprise Zone Board.

81. QUARTER 3 IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORTS

The Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) introduced a report to present the monitoring of progress for the third quarter of 2015/16 focusing on the areas relevant to the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee. She advised that the monitoring report gave an explanation of the progress being made towards the delivery of the outcomes set out in the 2015/16 Improvement Plan.

The Service Manager Enterprise and Regeneration Programmes, the Service Manager Council Housing Services, the Services Manager Customer Support, and the Service Manager Housing Programmes presented the work undertaken to improve performance in their respective areas as detailed in appendices 1 to 3 of the report.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their detailed reports and invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin raised a number of concerns around Disabled Facilities Grants, and the 'full house approach' and bathroom installations. In response to a query around provision for homeless people and the number of Flintshire people being referred to the Night Shelter in Wrexham the Community Support Services Manager said she would provide figures to Councillor Dolphin following the meeting.

Councillor George Hardcastle asked how many homeless people were currently on the register and how many people/families were in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. The Community Support Services Manager said there were currently none in bed and breakfast accommodation but would verify this following the meeting and report back to Councillor Hardcastle. She also explained that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on all the issues and housing solutions.

During discussion Officers responded to the further queries and concerns raised by Councillor Ian Dunbar. In response to Councillor Dunbar's question concerning Town and Rural Regeneration, the Service Manager Enterprise and Regeneration Programmes advised that nine businesses had formally signed up to the Deeside Shop Front grant scheme but none had reached the offer stage. This was mainly due to the time taken in completing the applications and

gathering information. An agent had been appointed to assist the businesses in future, which would speed up the process going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

82. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Community & Enterprise and Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

The Facilitator explained that following consultation with the Chair, it was proposed to move the meeting scheduled for 27 April 2016 to 9 May 2016. This was agreed by the Committee. The Committee also approved the proposed changes to the items being submitted to the 13 April 2016 and 9 May 2016 meetings and it was agreed that the following items would be submitted to the meetings scheduled below:-

13 April 2016

- NEW Homes
- Community First
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014 – Homelessness

9 May 2016

- SHARP
- WHQS
- Review of Fair Debt Policy

Given the number of changes, it was agreed that the Facilitator would circulate an updated forward work programme to the Committee following the meeting.

The Facilitator advised that the Committee were invited to attend the next Planning Strategy Group to take part in the Gypsy and Traveller Study item, it was agreed that details of the meeting would be e-mailed to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments listed above, the forward work programme be approved

83. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

84. COUNCIL HOUSING SERVICE - HOUSING MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Service Manager Council Housing introduced a report on a new staffing structure required to deliver the Housing Management function which forms part of the Council Housing Service of the Community & Enterprise Portfolio. He explained that the proposed structure aimed to transform service delivery making it more efficient, effective and better value for money by refocusing the service on letting homes, tenancy enforcement and sustainment, neighbourhood management and engagement. The proposed structure would help build resilience within the team by offering the flexibility to respond to any capacity and demand issues.

The Service Manager referred to the key considerations as detailed in the report. Members were asked to consider the proposed Housing Management staffing structure as outlined in appendix 2 to the report prior to submission to Cabinet.

Councillor George Hardcastle asked how many solar panels had been installed across Flintshire. The Senior Manager Council Housing Services agreed to provide this information following the meeting.

Councillor Ron Hampson raised concerns over the waiting times for inspections to properties within his ward. The Senior Manager Council Housing Services agreed to speak to Councillor Hampson regarding this matter following the meeting.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin requested that the names and contact numbers of officers be provided to Members. The Senior Manager Council Housing Services agreed to provide this information when the restructure had been completed.

Councillor Mike Reece asked if a 'meet and greet' for officers and Members could be arranged. Councillor Helen Brown agreed for this to be organised when the restructure was completed.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Management staffing structure, as set out in the report, be supported.

85. HOUSING PROGRAMMES RESTRUCTURE

The Service Manager Housing Programmes introduced a report on a proposed staffing structure designed to develop and implement an innovative and responsive Housing Strategy and linked policy initiatives to emerging housing themes across Flintshire which includes the effective management and delivery of key Housing Programmes. The Service Manager Housing Programmes reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report and referred to the housing programmes restructure. Members were asked to consider the proposed staffing structure produced to meet the requirements of the Housing Programmes Division, which was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the staffing structure for the Housing Programmes team, as set out in the report, be supported.

86. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.58 pm)

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Chairman