

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 SEPTEMBER 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 16 September 2015

PRESENT: **Councillor Veronica Gay (Chair)**

Councillors Haydn Bateman, Ron Davies, David Evans, Cindy Hinds,
Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors: Clive Carver (for Hilary Isherwood), Mike Peers (for Nancy Matthews) and Carolyn Thomas (for Ann Minshull)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Chris Dolphin.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mike Reece and Arnold Woolley

CONTRIBUTORS: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Chief Officer (Planning and Environment), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), and Highway Network Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Education & Youth and Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

26. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 May 2015 were submitted.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 July 2015 were submitted.
- (iii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 July 2015 were submitted

Accuracy

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the final paragraph on page 21 and said that the comments on the much improved road network along the coastal corridor had been made by him and not Councillor Joe Johnson. Councillor Shotton thanked the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) for the briefing note which had been distributed on traffic calming measures.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above amendment the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27. REVIEW OF WINTER MAINTENANCE

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to seek the Committee's recommendation to Cabinet for approval of the revised Winter Maintenance Policy for use by the Council as Highway Authority.

The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the key considerations detailed in the report concerning the updates and changes to the current Winter Maintenance Policy, the legislative requirements of providing such a service, budget allocation and actual expenditure, changes to the Council's salting routes, and the actions taken by Streetscene and Transportation portfolio to support the Winter Maintenance Service.

Members were invited to raise questions.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas raised a number of concerns relating to gritting and operational practices in rural areas and expressed the view that there was a lack of consistency. She asked if a cost comparison was undertaken to determine the cost of providing a gritting service and the cost of providing salt for use by pedestrians and motorists in rural isolated areas. The Chief Officer responded to the comments and queries raised and referred to the risk assessment approach which was undertaken on the salting of roads. He agreed to provide Councillor Thomas with information on the cost comparisons of salt heaps and gritting.

Councillor Colin Legg congratulated the Chief Officer and his team on the Winter Maintenance service provided which ensured safe passage for Flintshire residents in the event of severe weather. He also praised the work undertaken by frontline gritting vehicles in the face of extreme weather conditions to ensure effective service. The Chief Officer thanked Councillor Legg for his comments and agreed to pass them on to his team. The Committee endorsed the sentiments expressed by Councillor Legg.

In response to the comments made by Councillor Legg concerning weather forecasts the Chief Officer explained that the Authority received daily weather forecasts specific to Flintshire throughout the winter period. The forecasts were provided by MeteoGroup which was a private weather forecasting organisation which had been used successfully by the Authority for a number of years.

In response to the further comments by Councillor Legg on vehicles accessing the Halkyn Depot site, the Chief Officer said he would look into why vehicles were continuing to access the site.

Councillor Clive Carver asked that if the level of service for County Roads was determined by elected Members could third party claims be made against

Members. The Chief Officer referred to the Highways Act 1980 which places a statutory duty on the Highway Authority and advised that the legislation did not impose an absolute duty but rather involves a balance between the degree of risk and the steps necessary to eliminate the risk. In order to provide a statutory defence the Council had produced a County Policy on winter maintenance which was reviewed on a regular basis.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the revised Winter Maintenance Policy document which was appended to the report and referred to section 3.2.3 on Priority 2 routes. He asked if prioritisation could be provided within the Priority 1 and 2 route categories so that the risk within the routes was ranked. The Chief Officer responded to the comments and explained that ranking does not apply to Priority 1 routes as they are classed as high priority to sustain free flowing movement of traffic. Priority 2 routes are formed from the Unclassified roads that form main distributor routes in both urban and rural areas and prioritisation within the category takes place according to local knowledge provided by the local supervisor/coordinator.

Councillor Mike Peers also referred to section 3.6.2 within the revised Policy and referred to the need to treat footways as well as public highways in the vicinity of residential homes and sheltered accommodation. The Chief Officer explained that there was an agreement between the Council's Highway's department and its Housing department that staff in the Housing department would salt the footways at sheltered accommodation. The Chair suggested that the Committee writes to the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ask for a report on the process in place to ensure that the Housing staff grit footpaths at sheltered accommodation across Flintshire.

During discussion the Chief Officer responded to the further comments and questions raised by Members concerning the levels of rocksalt maintained by the Authority, and budgetary considerations.

Councillor Ron Davies commented on the two roads in his Ward leading to Deeside Hospital. He said that one was gritted as a Priority 1 route but the other was not and asked if this could be reviewed. The Chief Officer said that he would look into this.

Councillor Cindy Hinds asked what the procedures were for ensuring routes to medical centres located within housing estates were made clear in bad weather. The Chief Officer said he would make sure that routes to medical centres on housing estates were included under the Priority 2 routes within the Policy.

The Chair requested that a copy of the Priority 2 routes be circulated to all Members. The Chief Officer agreed to provide this.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommends approval of the revised Winter Maintenance Policy and its procedures for delivering the Winter Maintenance Service to Cabinet;

- (b) That the removal of two rural gritting routes, currently operated by Agricultural contractors, that do not meet the criteria required within the Priority 1 gritting routes be noted; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the two Unclassified roads which have historically been treated by Denbighshire County Council and have been removed from their Priority 1 gritting routes, will not receive precautionary gritting in future as they do not meet Flintshire's Priority 1 gritting route criteria.

28. INTRODUCTION OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR LITTERING

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced a report to inform the Committee of the proposals to refresh the zero tolerance approach to littering offences.

The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the main considerations as detailed in the report. He explained that by a more vigorous application of a zero tolerance approach and better communications of the likely outcome of littering by individuals it was expected that the number of staff required to clear litter in towns and villages could be reduced. The cost of street and open space litter collections in Flintshire was unsustainable in the current financial climate and enforcement of the zero tolerance approach would assist the service to achieve its financial targets for future years.

Councillor Paul Shotton spoke in support of the zero tolerance to littering offences and praised the work of street cleaning operatives who had to address the issue on a daily basis. He also referred to the issue of 'fly-tipping' and suggested that the fines imposed on people who commit these offences be increased. The Chief Officer explained that littering offences are dealt with by the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) which would eventually result in prosecution if payment was not made. Offenders who committed 'fly-tipping' were prosecuted where sufficient evidence existed.

On the issue of dog-fouling Councillor Joe Johnson asked how many Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued to dog owners. The Chief Officer agreed to provide this information to Councillor Johnson following the meeting. The Chair highlighted the service provided by Dog Patrol who will help to provide valuable information about the issue of dog-fouling in public places.

Councillor Mike Peers raised the issue of littering on private land and lay-bys, and asked how the Authority addressed this problem. He also referred to the issue of side-waste. Councillor David Evans reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor Peers regarding littering on non-owned Council land and also referred to the issue of abandoned supermarket shopping trolleys. He commented on advertising boards and fly posters which were put on buildings and the cost to the Authority of removing such items.

The Chief Officer responded to the concerns raised and explained that side waste was removed. He referred to the trolley policy which provides trolley collection arrangements with most of the large supermarkets. Commenting on this issue of fly-tipping the Chief Officer advised that the Authority did not have

the right to collect and dispose of items from private land as this was the responsibility of the landowner. He said the same advice applied to the issue of fly posters and advertising boards which were attached to private buildings.

In view of the concerns around litter on private land, the Chair suggested that a question be put to representatives of Natural Resources Wales during their attendance at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 3rd December on how robust they are at clearing litter from private land.

In response to a request from Councillors Carolyn Thomas and Cindy Hinds regarding the evidence required to provide proof of an offence being committed, the Chief Officer agreed to provide the Committee with a briefing note on best practice in collecting evidence for fly tipping.

Councillor Mike Peers also commented on the issue of mud on the roads due to building developments. He asked if a copy of the letters sent to Redrow asking them to clear the mud off the road at their development in Buckley be provided to him. The Chief Officer agreed to provide these following the meeting.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked that all Streetscene staff be made aware of the Zero Tolerance approach to ensure all litter was collected when grass cutting and collecting waste.

The Chair expressed concerns around the problem of litter around school premises and expressed the need to educate young people at an early age. The Chief Officer gave an assurance that regular visits to schools were carried out to reinforce the zero tolerance approach to littering.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed refresh of the Zero Tolerance approach to littering in the County be supported; and
- (b) That the proposed Communication Plan and infrastructure improvements planned, prior to the roll out of Zero Tolerance be supported.

29. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) referred to the briefing note which had been prepared and circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting to update on progress made on implementing the outcome of the Speed Limit review on A and B roads in Flintshire. He advised that it was anticipated that the work would be completed within the 6 months timescale.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed the Committee's thanks to officers involved in the speed limit review for their hard work. The Chief Officer thanked the Committee and agreed to pass the comments on to his team.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

30. QUARTER 1 – IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORTS

The Quarter 1 Improvement Plan Monitoring Report was presented to the Committee for consideration. The report presented the monitoring of progress for the first quarter of 2015/16 focusing on the areas of under performance relevant to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members were advised that detailed sub priority reports were appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

31. DNA RECOGNITION INFORMATION BANK TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented a report to enable the Committee to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group to consider the feasibility of dog DNA testing in Flintshire. She advised that if the Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group nominations for membership would be sought from the Committee and a draft project plan would be submitted to the first meeting of the Group.

Councillor Joe Johnson asked how successful other Local Authorities had been in establishing such schemes.

Councillors Paul Shotton and Brian Lloyd expressed concerns around the cost and resource implications around enforcement and action.

Councillor Mike Peers suggested that individuals with the necessary knowledge and expertise be invited to join the Task and Finish Group.

The Chairman invited Councillor Arnold Woolley to speak at the meeting. Councillor Woolley referred to the Notice of Motion he had submitted to the meeting of the County Council on 23 July 2015 and said he had asked that a cross-group working party be established to examine the feasibility of introducing a dog DNA recognition information bank for dog owners within the County.

During discussion the Committee agreed to the setting up of a Task and Finish Group to consider the feasibility of dog DNA testing in Flintshire. It was agreed that an invitation be sent to all Members of the Council asking for expressions of interest to sit on the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee agree to establish a Task & Finish Group; and
- (b) That the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator contact all Members of the Council to invite expressions of interest to sit on the Task & Finish Group.

32. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (ENVIRONMENT)

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the forward work programme of the Committee. She advised Members that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 3 December 2015 would be held at Wepre Park, Connah's Quay.

In response to Members' comments on the proposed works on the A55/A494 and the update to be provided at the meeting of the Committee on 21 October 2015, the Chief Officer agreed to circulate a briefing note to the Committee on the timescales for proposals and consultation.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) referred to a briefing note which had been prepared and circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting to update on the recently installed traffic calming scheme on Bagillt High Street. He explained that work and discussions were ongoing.

It was agreed that the following report be added to the list of items scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee on 21 October:-

- Consultation Process for the Introduction of Traffic Calming and Other Highway Safety Features

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

33. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.15 pm)

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Chair