

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 11 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors Mike Allport, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillors Veronica Gay and Colin Legg

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Derek Butler and Richard Lloyd

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Chief Officer (Planning & Environment); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation); and Community & Business Public Protection Manager

For minute number 13

Service Manager Strategy; Development Manager; Minerals & Waste Planning Service Manager; Tom Woodall - Access & Natural Environment Manager

For minute number 16

Highways Policy Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 16 June 2017 were submitted.

Minutes - 16 June 2017

Minute number 7 - Response to the Welsh Government Deeside Corridor Consultation: Councillor David Evans said that having enquired about the green route, he had been advised that there were no details as this was an aspirational route intended as an alternative to the red and blue routes. He asked that this be included in the minutes.

Minute number 8 - Update on Provision of Residents Parking Schemes and Disabled Bays on the Highway Network: Following a query by Councillor

Haydn Bateman, the Chief Officer confirmed that the recommended policy change, as set out in the resolution, would be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendment on minute number 7, both sets of minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) invited each of his service manager to introduce themselves and give a brief summary on their respective work areas and future objectives.

In response to questions from Councillor Chris Dolphin on retrospective planning applications, the Development Manager explained the approach taken to dealing with the resolution of planning control breaches and the subsequent delays arising where more complex issues were involved. Following Councillor Dolphin's concerns on a previous decision made at Greenfield Valley, the Chief Officer reported that the recommendations of the governance review had been accepted and that a new Board of Trustees would be established. Councillor Joe Johnson asked about opportunities for Council Members to be included on the new Board and was told that all applicants would be assessed through the same process.

Councillor Vicky Perfect thanked the Access & Natural Environment Manager and his team for their help on a recent local event.

16. ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced the report to outline the background to proposals on the Active Travel Draft Integrated Network Map and details of the public consultation programme. The Welsh Government (WG) placed a duty on councils to meet requirements of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. As part of these obligations, the Council's existing Active Travel route maps had been approved by WG within the deadline.

The Highways Policy Officer gave a demonstration on how to access the public consultation documents on the Integrated Network Map (INM) through the link on the Council's website. The INM would feature proposals to improve the infrastructure for walkers and cyclists to access services and facilities across the county as well as offering recreational provision. The proposals (some of which were subject to further agreements) were shown on six maps of different settlement areas along with an overview map of the county. The website also included details of public consultation drop-in sessions. The public consultation was due to conclude on 24 September 2017 at which time all responses would be considered to enable the final INM to be submitted to the WG for approval by 3 November 2017.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas explained that Active Travel would underpin planning developments and that the original settlement areas prescribed by WG had been broadened to consider all 'routes with purpose'.

Councillor Cindy Hinds spoke about encouraging parents to walk their children to school to alleviate parking outside schools. Councillor Richard Lloyd, who was present in the public gallery, felt that the width of pavements and overgrown hedges in some areas was an issue. The Highways Policy Officer referred to a link recently emailed to Members on work being undertaken by Public Health Wales and partners on this topic. She said that some of the proposals included existing route maps and that bids could be made for funding on safety schemes. Once the INM had been approved, the Council would work with other organisations to access funding streams available to them.

On road safety outside schools, Members were asked to raise areas of concern to officers' attention. The Council had been successful in securing funding for three schemes to reduce parking outside schools and welcomed opportunities to extend this to other areas. Progress was acknowledged by Councillors Chris Bithell and Paul Shotton in respect of consultation on proposed schemes in their wards.

The Chief Officer clarified that limited funding had been provided by WG for councils to meet the Active Travel requirements. He encouraged responses to the consultation to help access grant funding to carry out the schemes.

Councillor Owen Thomas called for more frequent grass cutting along roads give greater visibility to cyclists and help prevent accidents. The Chief Officer advised that a future report was scheduled on grass cutting standards which had not been changed and he urged Members to report any specific areas where safety was a concern.

Councillors Owen Thomas and Haydn Bateman both gave examples of routes involving disused railway lines which had previously been surveyed. In respect of the latter, explanation was given on why this particular route was unviable due to the permissions needed by landowners.

Councillor Chris Dolphin expressed his disappointment on Active Travel outcomes and felt that some schemes were not viable from the outset unless funding was allocated. He also felt that more frequent grass cutting was needed along rural lanes to help cyclists. The Highways Policy Officer said that all of the proposed schemes had been audited and were achievable if funding could be accessed and appropriate land ownership issues and legal agreements/licences overcome including successful Road Traffic Orders. The Chief Officer said that the proposals included some priority schemes as well as those requiring development over the longer term. He encouraged responses to the consultation as demand for evidence-based schemes would make a stronger case for funding bids. The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) highlighted the importance of working with Planning to maximise funding opportunities from the private sector.

In response to a question by Councillor David Evans on the interactive mapping page, the Highways Policy Officer would ask that these be removed from the website as they were out-of-date.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin commented on working partnerships to benefit the Deeside Enterprise Zone and Northern Gateway. He stressed the

importance of Active Travel in areas such as Shotton and Connah's Quay and the need for the UK to adopt an improved infrastructure for cyclists as seen in Europe. The Chief Officer referred to proposals on the North East Wales Metro as an integrated transport solution involving joint working between councils, the WG and local businesses. On links to community transport, an update was scheduled for a future meeting on the rollout of specific projects.

In response to comments, Councillor Carolyn Thomas emphasised the Council's decision to expand routes outside the original settlement areas and said that all suggestions would be considered including those mentioned on disused railway lines. On grass cutting, she said that the policy would be considered at a future meeting including funding implications. In referring to the information circulated on Public Health Wales, she asked that future emails be accompanied by a briefing note to draw Members' attention to the matter.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the consultation programme of events be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee receives a further report on the outcome of the consultation.

17. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2017/18

The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) introduced the Food Service Plan 2017-18 which set out the aims and objectives on the delivery of the Food Service for the forthcoming year, with a review of performance for 2016-17. The Council was obliged to produce the Plan annually and views were sought prior to seeking approval by Cabinet and onward submission to the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Members were informed about an information session on Food Safety to be scheduled in the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

The Community & Business Public Protection Manager provided an overview of the Food Safety team and highlighted key achievements on performance in 2016/17 as well as targets for 2017/18.

In response to questions from Councillor Paul Shotton, the Manager clarified the process for dealing with premises which had failed inspections. On concerns about unlicensed cockling, she advised that the team had well-established links with North Wales Police and the FSA's Crime & Fraud team.

Councillor Sean Bibby welcomed the approach taken to encourage improvements in food hygiene ratings. When asked about performance measurement on food safety, it was noted that Flintshire was in the top performing quartile in Wales.

Councillor Owen Thomas asked about standards for mobile food outlets and was informed about the different risk rating which applied to establishments which were deemed a higher risk by the FSA. In respect of premises achieving a food hygiene rating of 3, it was acknowledged that those establishments had met some of the elements involved in the rigorous assessment.

Following a query by Councillor Haydn Bateman, the Manager provided clarification on work on food supplements. More details could be shared at the information session on Food Safety.

Councillor Chris Bithell commended the findings of the report which reflected the important work of the team in promoting safety and hygiene standards. He said that work would continue to build on those achievements in 2017/18. He went on to welcome the Welsh Government's decision for the display of food hygiene ratings to be a mandatory requirement.

On collaborative working with other councils, Councillor David Evans suggested the possibility of Flintshire taking a lead role on services to generate income. The Manager said that this could be a topic for future consideration but would require investment to develop the service and increase capacity. She went on to give examples of regional work currently ongoing.

RESOLVED:

That the Food Service Plan 2017-18 be endorsed.

18. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17 OUTTURN REPORT

The Chief Officer (Planning & Environment) introduced the regular update report to consider progress towards the delivery of impacts set out in the 2016/17 Improvement Plan, focussing on the areas of under performance relevant to the Committee at year end.

The one major risk area on flood alleviation was due to the lack of national funding to support schemes. A brief update was given on the scheme in Mold which was being split into four areas to help with bids for funding.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) explained that the only red performance indicator was due to a decline in uptake of the Pass Plus Cymru course for newly qualified young drivers. On actions taken to achieve outcomes, he reported on progress on community transport arrangements in Kinnerton, with four more planned to be implemented over the Summer.

Following a query by Councillor Paul Shotton on reducing the occurrence and impact of environmental crime, it was agreed that a breakdown of the 3900 fixed penalty notices (FPN) issued would be shared with the Committee. The Chief Officer said that the majority were for litter offences whilst around 90 were for dog fouling. He reiterated the challenges in enforcement of dog fouling and gave a reminder that the current contract with the enforcement company ensured a proactive approach to monitoring broader areas and would be reviewed by the Committee before the end of the pilot.

In welcoming this engagement with Members, Councillor Bibby pointed out that a number of complaints had been received on the enforcement company focussing on litter offences as these were seen as easier targets. A similar point was made by Councillor Joe Johnson on discarding cigarette ends. This prompted discussion on the need to extend provision of multi-use bins at bus stops which should be regularly emptied.

The Chief Officer stressed the importance of reporting evidence on dog fouling hotspots and pointed out that the positive impact of littering enforcement on town centres was evident. Councillor Cindy Hinds commented on the need for an increased Police presence in town centres.

The Chairman cited dog fouling and fly tipping as the main two environmental complaints and asked that an update on dog fouling be included on the Forward Work Programme. He asked about the locations of the FPNs issued for dog fouling and the Chief Officer agreed to include this in the breakdown information, but gave a reminder that Members were able to contact Ruth Cartwright if they wished to view details of the enforcement work programme for their respective areas.

Councillor Owen Thomas commented on the timing of fly tipping incidents in his ward and was urged to report any intelligence. He reiterated a previous suggestion about the stamping of car registration numbers on fast-food packaging to reduce incidents of this type of litter. The Chief Officer replied that representations had been made to the companies involved but to no avail.

Councillor Haydn Bateman referred to specific examples of FPNs issued for littering and was informed that although there was currently no appeal process, some cases had been overturned by using the CCTV footage. The Chief Officer said that a method of appeal should feature in the new contract and gave assurance that enforcement officers were encouraged to take a consistent approach to issuing FPNs but reminded the Committee that the Council had agreed a zero tolerance approach to littering.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

19. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration and suggested the following changes:

- The Council Plan to be added to the items for September 2017.
- Flood Defences to be added to the items for October 2017.
- An update on Greenfield Valley to be added to the items for December 2017 along with the Grass Cutting Policy and an information session on Food Safety.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

20. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.10 pm)

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Chairman