

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**11 DECEMBER 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

**PRESENT: Councillor Paul Cunningham (Chairman)**

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, George Hardcastle, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Patrick Heesom, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Rita Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Billy Mullin, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tony Sharps, Aaron Shotton, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas, Owen Thomas, Martin White, David Williams and David Wisinger.

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Andrew Holgate, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Mike Reece, Andy Williams and Arnold Woolley.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Planning and Environment), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Finance Manager, Democratic Services Manager, Internal Audit Manager and Team Leader – Committee Services.

**67. PRESENTATIONS**

**Theatr Clwyd**

Winner of the 'Best Musical Production' category in the 2018 UK Theatre Awards for 'The Assassination of Katie Hopkins'

The Chief Executive congratulated Tamara Harvey and Liam Evans-Ford on the award which was presented at the ceremony on 14<sup>th</sup> October. The ground-breaking production of The Assassination of Katie Hopkins was named Best Musical Production in the annual UK Theatre Awards which celebrated outstanding achievements in regional theatre throughout the UK. It was against strong competition from other nominees such as Miss Littlewood, Pieces of String and Summer Holiday.

Councillor Butler also congratulated the team on winning the prestigious award and thanked them for the revitalisation of Theatr Clwyd which was now home to engaging performances and was one of Flintshire's great employers.

Councillor Sharps also congratulated Tamara Harvey and Liam Ford-Evans for the outstanding achievements since their arrival at the Theatr, which

was an asset to the Council and the community. Theatr Clwyd was a place to be proud of and he paid credit to all of the staff.

The Chief Executive suggested that a presentation be delivered at a future meeting of County Council by Tamara Harvey and Liam Ford-Evans on the work of the Theatr.

### **Planning Team**

Winner of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Wales for The Walks, Flint.

The Chief Executive congratulated the team on winning the award and said The Walks in Flint was the first site to be developed as part of the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP), which comprised 92 new council and affordable, energy-efficient homes which had been built by the programme partner, Wates Residential North.

Councillor Bithell thanked the team for their work and congratulated them on their success in winning the respected award. He said the work demonstrated how initiatives could be delivered with important outcomes, such as preventing homelessness, reducing fuel poverty and improving living conditions.

Councillor Aaron Shotton concurred and said it showed value, expertise and professionalism in a service that was often criticised. The team had created a sense of place and community and the RTPI was for the benefit of the residents of Flintshire.

## **68. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were submitted.

On minute number 56, Minutes, Councillor Ellis asked that her comments be included in the minutes of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 in relation to the Notice of Motion on Brexit as follows: "We don't have the mandate of the residents of Flintshire to support calls for a second referendum". Councillor Heesom asked that his comments also be included about Brexit in the same minutes. Reference to the amendments would be made to the minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### **RESOLVED:**

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

## **69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were received.

## **70. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

A copy of the Chairman's Communications had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

The Chair commented in particular on meeting Anastasia Blease, a 14 year old from Carmel who attended St Richard Gwyn High School. She was the only Welsh member of Great Britain's Under 24 Wheelchair Basketball Team, and he expressed his congratulations to her.

**71. PETITIONS**

None were received.

**72. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None were received.

**73. QUESTIONS**

None were received.

**74. NOTICES OF MOTION**

None were received.

**75. COUNCIL FUND BUDGET 2019/20 – UPDATED FORECAST AND PROCESS FOR STAGE 3 OF BUDGET SETTING**

The Chief Executive introduced the verbal report on the Council Fund Budget 2019/20 – Updated Forecast and Process for Stage 3 of Budget Setting.

A presentation was delivered by the Chief Executive and the Corporate Finance Manager which focussed on the following areas:

- #BacktheAsk – Campaigning Position;
- #BacktheAsk – Council Tax;
- #BacktheAsk – Public Debate;
- Update on Recent National Funding Announcements;
- Provisional Settlement Announcements;
- First Minister Announcements;
- Updated Budget Forecast for 2019/20;
- Council Tax – Current Estimates;
- School Budgets – Teachers Pay;
- Additional Information ;
- #BacktheAsk – Refresh;
- Letter to Cabinet Secretary; and
- Next Steps and Timelines.

The Chief Executive commented on the circular letter of the outgoing First Minister to all local authorities in Wales received later on the afternoon of the County Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Following a number of specific Flintshire 'asks' that had been covered in that letter and granted, an updated letter from himself and the Leader of the Council to the Cabinet Secretaries for Finance and for Local Government and Public Services (on 28<sup>th</sup> November) as the Council's formal response to the consultation on the Provisional Settlement.

The letter represented the debate at Council on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Copies of both letters had been provided to all Members.

The letter to the Cabinet Secretaries said that the Council believed that Welsh Government (WG) had enough financial flexibility to further improve the Settlement and called for an improved Final Settlement which was to be announced on 19<sup>th</sup> December. The letter also explained that if no further improvements were made to the Settlement, Flintshire may have to adopt a Council Tax rise of 9% upwards to balance the budget for 2019/20. A formal request was made to improve the Settlement whereby Flintshire would benefit from a further minimum £2m of revenue funding.

On the Provisional Settlement announcements and additional grants, the Corporate Finance Manager explained the benefit of each to the Council. He also provided details on how the First Minister's announcements would benefit Flintshire in 2018/19, and 2019/20.

The Chief Executive reiterated that without any further announcements the remaining budget gap of £3.148m, following the updated forecast for 2019/20, would still require an overall Council Tax rise of in the region of 9.3%. The final increase in the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Levy was still to be confirmed and would have to be added to this Council requirement. Based on a provisional Levy increase of £0.420m, this would require a further increase of around 0.5% on Council Tax.

He explained the situation on teachers' pay and said the recent announcement allowed the Council to meet the minimum position of providing an uplift to meet the pay award. Additional funding through a specific grant was expected for 2018/19 which would be passported to schools to contribute to the additional costs incurred in-year.

A further report would be made to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> December and to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> December. The Chief Executive asked Members to continue to support #BacktheAsk campaign prior to the Final Settlement being received on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Once the Final Settlement had been received, the information would be reviewed with the aim of approving a balanced budget at County Council on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The recommendation of the report was moved by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Aaron Shotton, and seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Bernie Attridge.

Councillor Shotton said the situation was fast moving and that much had taken place since the last County Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November. He paid credit and thanks to Councillor Debbie Wilcox, Leader of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), for the work undertaken with Council Leaders. He commented on the Council letter sent to the Cabinet Secretaries, noting the two areas which remained a concern for the Council - the potential for an approximate 9% rise in Council Tax and the threats to education funding. Flintshire was committed to retaining existing funding for education but that funding was not enough. He also expressed his thanks to the outgoing First Minister for being receptive to the plight of Flintshire and Local Government and he hoped there would be an opportunity for the incoming First Minister to look

further at the need for additional funding. The campaigning that had taken place, for the benefit of Flintshire residents. He expressed his thanks for this work.

Following a question from Councillor Richard Jones, the Chief Executive explained that the slides on the First Minister's announcements covered the impact on the two financial years of 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Councillor Peers commented on the letter to the Cabinet Secretaries where it was made clear that the funding for local authorities was grossly inadequate and that there appeared to be an acceptance that Council Tax rises would have to bridge the funding gap. He asked what support was being received from the local Assembly Members and what Council Tax rises other authorities were considering. The Chief Executive explained that the point on Council Tax had been made in all of the communications with WG knowingly shifting the responsibility for funding local services to the local Council Tax payer. It was not known precisely what other authorities were looking towards on their Council Tax rise as the situation was fast changing. He encouraged all Members to make contact with any of the decision makers at WG, including local and regional Assembly Members.

Councillor Patrick Heesom said he could not support any Council Tax rise over 4% and questioned the budget process and the strategy adopted. The Chief Executive responded that the budget had been considered at each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with the risk assessments. These assessments demonstrated that there was no further scope within services to find any more savings of scale. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee had accepted that and the decision was a collective one, based on professional advice. If any Member had ideas of where additional savings could be made they could ask the team to look into it without delay.

Councillor Hilary McGuill proposed an amendment that the two local Assembly Members should be invited to a meeting with all Members, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> December, so that they could hear, face to face, the situation and the experiences of Members. Councillor Heesom seconded the amendment. Councillor Kevin Hughes proposed a further amendment for the invitation should be extended to regional Assembly Members too; this was accepted by the mover and seconder of the original amendment. Councillors Shotton and Attridge, as mover and seconder of the original recommendation, accepted the amendment from Councillor McGuill.

Councillor Attridge then moved a further amendment that the local Members of Parliament also be invited to the meeting, which was seconded by Councillor Chris Bithell and accepted by the mover and seconder of the amendment, and became the substantive motion. The Chief Executive indicated that it may not be possible to arrange a meeting in such a timescale and suggested early to mid-January may be more feasible.

Councillor Tony Sharps said he fully supported education and would never support a cut in the funding for that service. He also commented on the cost of the office move to Ty Dewi Sant in Ewloe, and the income that was being lost on car park charges. Councillor Carolyn Thomas responded to the point made on car park charges and said that if full cost recovery was sought the charges would

increase significantly. On the move to Ty Dewi Sant, the Chief Executive explained that a briefing note would be prepared for all Members showing the savings being made from the move. On education, the Chief Executive confirmed that schools budgets would not be reduced as a policy position based on risk.

Councillor Glyn Banks asked if consideration could be given to asking WG if the Council could be released from the current loan agreements for buying out the arrangements whereby a portion of Flintshire rent were paid to WG and whether cheaper alternative rates could then be sought. The Chief Executive suggested that a report could be submitted to Community and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the New Year. The Chief Officer (Governance) said that WG had lifted the cap on borrowing so this was a timely request.

Councillor Carol Ellis said she was proud of the Social and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee as it had directly challenged the Minister over the last 12 months on inadequacies in the funding.

Councillor Shotton, in his summing up, said it was important to have cross party consensus on the budget and said he strongly disagreed with Councillor Heesom's comments about the strategy not being right. Nine years of austerity had resulted in the Council being in a position that there was nothing else that could be done to identify any other savings. One of the main aims was to protect the key services of education and social services and no other strategy would have resulted in the Council being in a better position. Significant savings had been made with many staff moving to Ty Dewi Sant and supporting the point made by Councillor Thomas, he said if full cost recovery was the aim for car parking income then charges would have to rise further. He asked Members to continue to support #BacktheAsk as neither did he wish to see such a rise in Council Tax.

On being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the verbal update on the updated budget forecast for 2019/20 be noted; and
- (b) That Members of Parliament and local and regional Assembly Members be invited to a meeting with all County Councillors, as soon as possible and preferably before 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

**76. UPDATE ARTICLE 7 OF THE CONSTITUTION - AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CHARTER**

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the Update Article 7 of the Constitution – Audit Committee Terms of Reference and Charter report which complied with best practice.

The Audit Committee Charter had been developed to document the role of the Audit Committee within the Council's Governance Framework. The Audit

Committee Terms of Reference and Charter, and the proposed changes, were agreed at the Audit Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November and by the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> November, subject to a review of the composition of the Committee by Audit Committee members at their next meeting.

As Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Helen Brown moved the recommendation.

Councillor Heesom asked if the number of members on the Audit Committee could be increased to 11 for a fairer representation. The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that was a matter for the Annual Meeting in May. Councillor Brown suggested that it could be discussed at the Working Group for Chairs of the Audit Committee and each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the changes to Article 7 as set out in appendices A and C be approved.

**77. FLINTSHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW**

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the Flintshire Electoral Review report. He thanked Members who had attended the recent internal workshop and provided details of the drop in sessions that had been arranged, which would start the following day.

Councillor Attridge moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Bithell.

On the point raised by Councillor Dave Healey at the workshop, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed the option presented would be withdrawn as the Caergwrle ward boundary was wrongly shown on the map provided by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales.

Councillor Peers said the second paragraph in the executive summary should read “this means having the same ratio in each electoral ward”, not number of electors. He said at the workshop there only appeared to be officer suggestions of any wards with 26% or above, and that there was no information made available on variance. He also asked if Members could have access to registers of adjoining wards. The Chief Executive said those could be made available at the drop in sessions. The Democratic Services Manager explained that two tables were available at the workshop, one with comments from Members and the second was officer suggestions based on red and amber areas.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work undertaken on the review of electoral arrangements for Flintshire be noted.

**78. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18 which provided the Council with assurance that the Overview and Scrutiny function was fulfilling its constitutional role.

As Chair and Vice Chair of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee, Councillors Rita Johnson and Marion Bateman moved and seconded the recommendation respectively.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2017/18 be received.

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

There was one member of the press and 8 members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.05 pm)

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**Chairman**