

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 JANUARY 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Remote Meeting on Tuesday, 12th January, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Rosetta Dolphin (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Patrick Heesom, Cindy Hinds, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton and Owen Thomas, Christopher Dolphin

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors::Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Christopher Dolphin and Rob Davies

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy); Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Transport Manager, and Head of Democratic Services

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chair expressed her condolences on the recent sad loss of Councillor Kevin Hughes. She advised that there would be an opportunity for Members to pay tributes to Councillor Hughes at the next meeting of the County Council. She invited Members to join her in applause to celebrate his life and achievements.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

32. ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Chair advised that it had been agreed that the Committee would receive an additional item at the meeting to enable the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) to provide an update on the waste collection service during the Christmas period.

33. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She explained that an item on the Council Plan which had been scheduled for consideration at today's meeting had been deferred to a future date as development of the Plan was ongoing. She drew attention to the items listed for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 February 2021 and said that it was

suggested that the items on Ash Dieback surveys and Borderlands Line Train Services be deferred to future meetings of the Committee. The Facilitator also advised that updates on the Integrated Transport Plan and Climate Change would be scheduled onto the agenda as appropriate.

Referring to actions from previous meetings the Facilitator advised that there was no update to report on the actions outstanding and progress was ongoing.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Paul Shotton and seconded by Councillor Chris Dolphin.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

34. FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO WG TRANSPORT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Transport Manager introduced a report on the Council's response to the WG Transport Strategy. He advised that the existing Transport Strategy had expired and the WG had published a new draft Strategy entitled 'Llwybr – Newydd – A New Wales Transport Strategy' with a request for comments/suggestions from interested parties by 25 January 2021. He said the report provided an overview of the content of the WG's revised Transport Strategy whilst also sharing details of the Council's proposed response to the formal consultation process for Scrutiny comment and additions.

The Transport Manager provided background information and reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report. He advised that following review of the new draft strategy the Consultation Response Form had been completed and was appended to the report for information and comment.

Councillor Patrick Heesom referred to the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) and said it would be helpful if the current provision of the JLTP was made available to Members. He also referred to paragraph 1.09 in the report and the adoption of a revised Transport Strategy and commented that the current transport system in North Wales was not fit for purpose. He expressed a number of concerns around the issue of transport corridors.

Councillor Heesom referred to WG proposals to introduce Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) which would undertake the preparation of the Regional Transport Plan and asked for clarification of the Authority's role on this. Councillor Heesom asked if he could be sent a blank copy of the Consultation Response Form to enable him to make his own comments and suggestions on the consultation.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) responded to the local and strategic concerns which had been expressed by Councillor Heesom. He provided further explanation around the JLTP, the role of CJsCs, and the Trunk Road network. The Chief Officer also provided an update on the concerns raised by Councillor Heesom regarding the Red route. The Chief Officer gave an assurance that the Authority was well represented on the Transport Network Groups for North Wales and commented that the work done by Flintshire was recognised by the WG as a model for good practice across North Wales.

In response to the further questions raised by Councillor Heesom concerning the Mostyn Dock area the Chief Officer explained that the Authority's transport plan had been expanded to include all areas in Flintshire. He advised that funding had been received from the WG to look at transport links in the north of the County which included Mostyn Docks.

Councillor Paul Shotton asked for an update on the Quality Bus partnerships, maintenance arrangements and signage on the Flintshire Dee Bridge, and the Red Route. In his response the Chief Officer explained that the WG were proposing that Transport for Wales take on the role across Wales of introducing quality partnerships on core networks and that a report was to be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet for consideration. The Chief Officer said clarification was being sought on the red route and that the Authority supported it.

Councillor David Evans referred to the responses provided to Questions 5 (targets for Active Travel usage) and 9 (road charges) in the Response Form (appended to the report). Acknowledging the comments and suggestions made by Councillor Evans the Transport Manager gave an explanation of the rationale and points made in the consultation response. In respect of Q9 it was noted that any road charge should not disadvantage rural communities who rely more heavily on their cars, due to the lack of regular public transport and local Active Travel routes.

In response to the comments made by Councillor Owen Thomas regarding the A55 and diversion routes the Chief Officer advised that the WG was looking at pressure points and capacity along the route.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas commented that the WG New Wales Transport Strategy was aspirational and would require behavioural change by people to take forward. She referred to progress on hydrogen, provision of electric car charging points, the Flintshire corridor (formerly the Red Route), the Dee Bridge crossing, and the bus network.

Councillor Derek Butler spoke of the need for greater public transport opportunities/integration to be made available to enable people to travel across Cheshire, Wrexham and Merseyside. He said the pandemic had changed how people lived and worked and reinforced the need for resources to be directed towards improving the public transport network for employment and economic purposes.

Councillor George Hardcastle expressed concerns regarding delays in progressing the A494 improvements

Councillor Carolyn Thomas explained that a petition had been put forward. Work was progressing with information on traffic flows and the environmental impact.. The Chief Officer advised that regular meetings were being held with officers in WG to identify the start date for the A494 and other proposed schemes

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to bus services and said many of the bus timetables at bus stops were out of date and some services had ceased. He commented on the need to encourage the general public to use public transport and said the lack of up to date information was a problem that discouraged this. Councillor Bithell referred to the Council's proposed response to question 10 as detailed in the Response Form concerning the impact on the Welsh language. He felt more emphasis needed to be made on the importance of maintaining transport links in Welsh speaking areas and commented on the importance of the tourist and hospitality industry. He emphasised the need for bilingual signage for both highway and tourism purposes in order to further promote the Welsh language and culture.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Owen Thomas and seconded by Councillor Chris Dolphin.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends that Cabinet approves the Council's response to the formal consultation process for the WG's revised Transport Strategy.

35. UPDATE ON WASTE RECYCLING DURING THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD

Prior to the update the Chair asked the Chief Officer to pass on her thanks to the Streetscene team for their sterling work during the Christmas period. She also expressed thanks to Officers in the Streetscene Team for their work and professionalism to keep herself and Members regularly informed of the waste collection arrangements throughout.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) commented on the impact of Covid-19 across the Streetscene and Transportation Service. He provided background information and reported on the decision making arrangements which had to be made in September 2020 around the collection of waste materials (including food waste) throughout the Christmas period (excluding Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day). He spoke of the united team effort that was made to address the substantial increase in waste collection during the festive period and explained that there had been 130 vehicle waste collections per day which was 3 times more than the normal volume. The Chief Officer explained that (with few exceptions) all waste had been collected by the Streetscene Team by 8 January. He paid tribute to the hard work and commitment of his staff who had worked in different roles (some voluntarily) and unsocial hours during the period to support colleagues in extremely challenging circumstances.

Members expressed their thanks to the Chief Officer and all his Team for their hard work throughout the Christmas and New Year holiday period and spoke in appreciation of the excellent service provided. Councillor Dennis Hutchinson

commented on the additional difficulties experienced by the Streetscene and Transportation service arising from the harsh Winter conditions and the current serious pandemic. .

36. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.38 am)

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Chairman