

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

Minutes of the remote attendance meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Tuesday, 8 June 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Rosetta Dolphin (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, David Evans, George Hardcastle, Patrick Heesom, Andy Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor: Ron Davies (for Cindy Hinds)

APOLOGY: Councillor Owen Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: The following attended as observers:

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Rob Davies and Christine Jones (Deputy Leader Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Chris Bithell (Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection), Councillor Glyn Banks (Cabinet Member for Streetscene), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Regulatory Services Manager and Principal Accountant

For minute number 8

Access & Natural Environment Manager and Biodiversity Officer

For minute number 9

Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitators and Democratic Services Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

It had been confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council that the Chair of the Committee should come from the Independent Alliance Group. The Committee was advised that Councillor Rosetta Dolphin had been appointed to this role for the municipal year.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Andy Hughes to his first meeting of the Committee, and congratulated Councillor Glyn Banks and Katie Wilby on their new appointments.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Councillor Rosetta Dolphin as Chair of the Committee be noted.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Sean Bibby nominated Councillor David Evans as Vice-Chair of the Committee and was seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson. There were no further nominations. On being put to the vote, this was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor David Evans be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors George Hardcastle and Paul Shotton.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and would liaise with the Chair and Chief Officers on items scheduled for July in order to accommodate the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Annual Report. Members' attention was drawn to the briefing session on recycling to be held later on the same date.

The Chief Executive said that in addition to Members submitting items for future meetings, the new Recovery Committee would assist Overview & Scrutiny Committees by identifying topics and risk areas for consideration, to help with the recovery phase.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors David Evans and Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (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; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

6. LITTER AND FLY TIPPING

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced a report on the impact of littering and fly tipping events during the emergency situation, as requested by the Committee. The report also included the agreed performance standards and enforcement responses.

In presenting the report, the Regulatory Services Manager referred to the impact of the emergency situation on the amount of waste collected from routine street cleansing and reported littering. Whilst the Council could investigate fly tipping, it was unable to remove waste from privately owned land. Information was also shared on enforcement and the focus on educating members of the public. Although less Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued due to the emergency situation, proactive enforcement work continued with a number of fly tipping cases currently being progressed and various initiatives underway including partnership working.

The Chief Officer provided information on the Caru Cymru initiative across Wales to encourage collective community action to minimise environmental waste. Fly tipping was a widespread issue with research analysis suggesting an increase of around 300% across the UK and was due to a range of factors.

The Chair suggested that a twice-yearly market stall could help to raise awareness of the team's activities.

Councillor Paul Shotton asked about the provision of additional public litter bins and was informed that sites were assessed against criteria and that Members were able to contact their area co-ordinators with suggested locations. The challenges in addressing fly tipping on private land would be raised at the next general enforcement all-Wales meeting to establish if any support was available from Welsh Government. A separate response would be provided to Councillor Shotton on parking provision outside Wepre Park.

As suggested by the Chief Executive, officers agreed to circulate the waste bin location criteria to Members and Town/Community Council Clerks and consider a forward plan of approved requests for bins with deadlines for incoming requests to help manage orders.

Councillor David Evans commented on the data which was generated by reported incidents being recorded on the system, which officers confirmed included those from litter-picking groups. Steps would be taken to ensure that cases referred directly to area coordinators by elected Members were also included. The Chief Officer responded to comments on the collection of supermarket trolleys by cleansing teams and said that the team could consider ways of engaging with supermarkets to reduce such instances.

Councillor Evans asked about the potential for the Council to be given powers to enforce against littering from people drinking alcohol in public places which was a growing problem in some areas. The Chief Executive said that options could be explored, noting that legal advice would need to be sought on whether these powers currently with the Police could be extended to Councils.

Councillor Evans proposed this as an additional recommendation and was seconded by Councillor Sean Bibby.

Following concerns raised by Councillor George Hardcastle about gully emptying, officers provided information on fleet provider arrangements and the teams responsible for waste collection and enforcement. The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy) agreed to share details of costs incurred for dealing with stray dogs.

In response to comments from Councillor Andy Hughes, explanation was given on engagement with members of the public and school pupils to influence behaviour, and the reasons for changes in the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued since 2018-19.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson raised concerns about the impact of blocked gullies and grids in areas prone to flooding. The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) said that frequency of gully emptying within the agreed standards was regularly reviewed and that hotspot areas were inspected more regularly. She would contact Councillor Hutchinson outside the meeting regarding ward issues.

The Chief Executive said that officer capacity to deal with flooding hotspots was under review and that any additional resources allocated would result in a further budget pressure for the Council.

In praising Streetscene teams for their work, Councillor Joe Johnson supported the suggestion for a market stall and said that additional waste bins along the coastal path would be useful.

Councillor Ian Roberts spoke in support of public education campaigns to highlight social responsibility and thanked the many litter-picking activities taking place across the County.

Councillor Glyn Banks thanked officers for the report and the education campaign, suggesting that a future increase in fines could be considered. He asked that Members refer any specific issues directly to the area supervisors.

The recommendations, as amended, were moved and seconded by Councillors David Evans and Sean Bibby.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the actions of Streetscene in dealing with littering and fly tipping events be noted; and
- (b) That officers explore whether the Council could be granted powers for enforcement of litter caused by alcohol consumption in public places.

7. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officers presented the end of year monitoring report to review year-end progress against their respective priorities set out in the Council's

Reporting Measures 2020/21 under the remit of the Committee. It was reported that 67% of performance indicators had met or exceeded their targets.

Within Streetscene & Transportation, there were two indicators with a red status for current performance against target. On the ongoing development of the Quality Bus Partnership, the results of a network review by Transport for Wales would be shared with the Committee when made available. On repairs by utility contractors, despite a decrease in post-completion inspections during the period, the number undertaken was above the statutory requirement.

For Planning, Economy & Environment, the impact from the emergency situation on performance was evident, however some outturns were only marginally below the target. The number of planning applications determined was improving as good progress was made on the backlog of work which had developed at the start of the emergency situation.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Paul Shotton and Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report be noted.

8. BIODIVERSITY DUTY UPDATE

The Chief Officer (Planning, Economy & Environment) introduced an update report on progress in delivering the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Council's second biodiversity duty plan entitled 'Supporting Nature in Flintshire' detailed ongoing good work in delivering these objectives during the period 2020-2023.

The Access & Natural Environment Manager reported that 85% of actions being taken to deliver the six objectives were either completed or on target. He spoke about the impact from the emergency situation on different work streams which required a change in the way of working.

The Committee was introduced to Sarah Slater, the Biodiversity Officer, who shared presentation slides covering:

- Investment in cut and collect machinery
- Non chemical weed control and cleaning
- Wildflower campaign

The Biodiversity Officer acknowledged the Chair's suggestion on the coastal path as a location for the wildflower campaign and said that sites were assessed against various criteria. She welcomed further suggestions from Members via email.

In response to comments from Councillor Glyn Banks, the Chief Officer (Planning, Economy & Environment) provided information on carbon storage projects including the appointment of Alex Ellis to explore options with Council

owned assets. The Biodiversity Officer spoke about investment in Foamstream chemical-free weed control system which was also used by other services across the Council.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Paul Shotton and Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That progress with the biodiversity strategy be supported.

9. COMMENCEMENT OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC DUTY

The Strategic Policy Advisor introduced a report on the Council's preparations for the commencement of the socio-economic duty. This was a statutory requirement upon relevant public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. The report was being shared with all Overview & Scrutiny Committees to raise awareness of the new obligations.

The Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager gave a joint presentation covering the following:

- What is the Socio-economic Duty and what does it do?
- Key terms
- Inequalities of outcomes
- Examples of poverty
- Demonstrating due regard - audit trail
- Meeting the duty - what we are doing
- Better outcomes
- Case study

The overall aim of the duty was to deliver better outcomes to people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage by listening to those individuals and demonstrating due regard. The legislation linked with various work streams to tackle poverty which was identified as one of the priorities within the Council Plan. The Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be leading on the whole Council Plan poverty theme and would receive regular reports.

Councillor Vicky Perfect welcomed the initiatives to address food poverty, particularly those helping pupils during school holidays.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Shotton, the Benefits Manager provided information on Welsh Government financial support to tackle food poverty and a joint initiative between the Council and NEWydd Catering & Cleaning Ltd on a referral scheme to provide support to families in need.

Councillor Patrick Heesom welcomed the work being undertaken to manage social changes in society.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Joe Johnson and David Evans.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee is assured of the Council's preparedness in meeting the new duty.

10. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 12.10pm)

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Chair