

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
25 JANUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of Flintshire County Council held at Remote Meeting on Tuesday, 25 January 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Joe Johnson (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Janet Axworthy, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Sian Braun, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Robert Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Mared Eastwood, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Ray Hughes, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Tudor Jones, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Roberts, Tim Roberts, Kevin Rush, Tony Sharps, Paul Shotton, Ralph Small, Ian Smith, Owen Thomas, Martin White, Andy Williams, and Arnold Woolley.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Head of Legal Services, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officers.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Cindy Hinds, Andy Hughes, Rita Johnson, Billy Mullin and David Wisinger

75. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th December were submitted.

Councillor Owen Thomas moved them as a correct record which was seconded by Councillor Small.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors McGuill and Axworthy declared personal interests in agenda item number 8 – Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22 as they were board members on NEW Homes.

77. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair explained that his communications had been emailed to all Members the previous week.

78. PETITIONS

None were submitted.

79. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NORTH WALES

The Chair welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for North Wales, Mr Andy Dunbobbin, to the meeting, who had been invited to discuss with the Council the role, impact and operation of the PCC and how the PCC and police and crime plan worked with/for Flintshire in partnership.

Mr Dunbobbin thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for giving him the opportunity to address Members. His role was to ensure that the people of North Wales had the best possible police service. He would be a listening ear and a strong voice on behalf of the people of North Wales and was confident that by working together North Wales would be a safe place to live and work, with the ultimate aim being to improve the lives of everybody in communities. He expressed his thanks to Councillor David Evans who was his successor in becoming the new Armed Forces Champion.

He had been heartened by the work carried out since his election into the role of PCC and how communities had supported each other; he wanted that sense of community to be reflected in his plan.

One of the most frequent complaints was that there was not enough police presence in communities anymore and he vowed to work hard to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of police officers. He was determined to ensure North Wales Police worked effectively with its partners to deliver an even better service and more people felt safe and had confidence in their police force. The plan had been written following consultation with partners and with the help of hundreds of people who had completed the survey for which he was grateful. He would closely monitor how North Wales Police and its partners delivered against the priorities which were:

- **Delivering safer neighbourhoods:** tackling and preventing rural and wildlife crime; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of police officers and police staff; and improving road safety
- **Supporting victims and communities:** tackling and preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence; safeguarding vulnerable people including children; tackling and preventing cybercrime; establishing a victims panel; and tackling and preventing hate crime
- **Fair and effective criminal justice system:** introducing a North Wales Female Offender Strategy; increasing the use of restorative justice; supporting and protecting children and young people and diverting them away from the Criminal Justice System; and addressing the root causes of offending and supporting the rehabilitation of people who had offended

The plan had been fully endorsed by the North Wales Police and Crime Panel.

In order to tackle issues ranging from drug dealing in towns to rural crime on farms, it was imperative that all North Wales communities had positive relationships and experiences with their local police. In addition to increasing the number of officers in communities, he was also committed to working with the Chief Constable to improve the digital support available to police officers and staff which would increase the amount of time they spent in the community.

The improvement of road safety was important and he was keen to see a reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads in North Wales with a tough approach being taken on dangerous and careless driving. He also commented on the road network playing a pivotal part in county lines.

Tackling and preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence would remain a major priority and he pledged that North Wales would be a hostile environment for perpetrators through the delivery of effective investigative techniques, partnership safeguarding and innovative use of technology making it less likely for them to offend and re-offend.

On the North Wales Female Offender Strategy, it would recognise women's distinct needs and vulnerabilities within the criminal justice system. There would be an emphasis on the importance of early intervention, including liaison and diversion, out of court disposals and a focus on community-based solutions with the aim of reducing the prison population and also improving the long term objectives for women and their families.

Cybercrime activity was growing fast and as such was a major threat to UK businesses. A Cyber Crime Team had been established and it was vital that the police approach to cybercrime was well co-ordinated and effective in providing a quality service for the people of North Wales.

Members across the Chamber thanked the PCC for his presentation and raised issues, and asked questions, on the following, to which the PCC responded:

- Issues experienced with using the 101 service – this was a national problem and the PCC recommended the use of webchat which had been successful and the community alert system
- Welcomed the cybercrime priority – it had never been a strategic objective before but it was one now
- 20,000 additional police officers by 2023 – North Wales would not be a beneficiary of that programme until January 2023
- Proceeds of crime – there were a number of different agencies involved in that work and one pot of money was split between all of those involved
- People feeling safe in approaching police officers – work was being undertaken on a national level to ensure that officers were adequately trained. Young men and boys were educated about behaviour and there was the SWAN programme to support women

- Presence of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) at Town and Community Council meetings – recognised the importance of their presence at those meeting but they may be dealing with important issues – any issues the town or community council had could be reported at any time
- In England women could walk into a fire station if they felt they were in danger and were not near a police station – this could be explored. There was also the ‘Ask Angela’ scheme which was in operation in public houses
- Mental health was a big concern – a meeting had been held with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board on the development of a new mental health initiative
- North Wales crime rate was higher than South Wales and the English / Welsh average – the recording and reporting of those figures would need to be looked at
- Lack of response from PCSOs – would be raised with the Chief Constable but Members could also raise it with their Inspector
- Re-starting ‘cuppa with a copper’ – the PCC would ask the question
- Was a transcript of the webchat offered - the PCC would ask the question

A number of ward issues and operational matters were raised which the PCC said he would bring to the attention of the Chief Constable.

The Chief Executive thanked the PCC for his attendance at the Council meeting which was appreciated. He suggested that he attend again in 12 months to provide an update on the delivery of the plan and the commitments discussed. The PCC suggested that an option could be for him to return again as part of the induction programme for new Members following the election.

Councillor Ian Roberts also thanked the PCC for his attendance at the meeting and the way in which he dealt with, and responded to, questions.

Councillor Dunbar moved that the PCC be thanked for his attendance and that he be invited to speak to the new Council later in the year. This was seconded by Councillor Bithell.

RESOLVED:

That the PCC be thanked for his attendance and that he be invited to speak to the new Council later in the year.

80. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS ACT 2021 UPDATE

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report and explained that, as in previous reports to Council, the Act was a significant piece of legislation which encompassed a number of issues. It was large, with 170 sections and 14 schedules, which reflected its lengthy gestation period. Some aspects of the Act reflected what Flintshire, as a best practice authority, was already doing. For other parts, officers would do the necessary work to implement them within the prescribed timescales.

Much of the Act had been brought into effect, although some key provisions would be implemented from 5th May 2022, to correspond with the date of the next Local Government Elections.

An officer working group had been established to ensure the Act was implemented in full and it would report from time to time to the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee and County Council.

Progress made to date was detailed in the appendix to the report.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Phillips seconded by Councillor Ian Roberts.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council be assured by the briefing report; and
- (b) That Council notes the constitutional and other implications of the Act, and that these are being worked on by the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 Implementation Working Group of officers, led by the Chief Officer (Governance).

81. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2021/22

The Corporate Finance Manager introduced the report which presented the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22 for approval.

At a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee on 17th November 2021 Members reviewed the Mid-Year report and recommended it to Cabinet. Cabinet received the Mid-Year report on 18th January 2022 and recommended to Council for approval.

Councillor Johnson thanked the Corporate Finance Manager and his team for the work done on the report, and for the Treasury Management training provided to Members.

Councillor Peers commented on the annual interest on long term borrowing and said it needed to be reduced as much as possible as it was currently over £1m a month.

Councillor Bithell asked with inflation being over 4% at the moment, could that result in a rise in interest rates. The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the Council was in constant contact with its advisors on the economic forecast moving forward as there was a chance interest rates could rise and have an impact on the Council's borrowing. However, when borrowing costs were budgeted, they were done so prudently for that reason.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Johnson and seconded by Councillor Ian Roberts.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22 be approved.

82. AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING CODE OF PRACTICE

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report and explained that in April 2021 Council updated the Protocol for Meeting Contractors as part of the review of the Council's Constitution. The parts of the Protocol relating to dealings with contractors/developers and other third parties who may be bidding for, or seeking a contract with the Council, were amended. Council resolved that the parts of the Protocol dealing with contact with developers be moved to the Planning Code of Practice (PCoP) to avoid duplication.

The Head of Legal Services explained that it resolved that parts of the Protocol for Meetings with Contractors that provided advice in respect of Developers should be contained in the PCoP and that the PCoP updated accordingly.

At the Council meeting in April 2021, which approved the updated Protocol, Members also requested that advice be added to the PCoP around the pre-application consultation process.

The Planning Strategy Group (PSG) considered the above proposed changes and a number of additional alterations to the PCoP were requested that they felt would be of assistance to Members involved in the planning process.

On 5th July 2021 the Standards Committee proposed some further additional amendments. The Constitution and Democratic Services Committee considered the proposed amended PCoP on 30th September 2021 and approved the proposed amended PCoP subject to some further alterations.

Councillor Bithell suggested on 8.1 – pre-application consultations, after the wording 'adjoining ward Member will be invited to attend', that the following wording be added 'when the application significantly affects the neighbouring Members ward'. The Head of Legal Services confirmed that the suggestion was consistent with the rest of the document. In response to a question from Councillor Peers, the Head of Legal Services explained that the decision on that would happen organically as part of the process.

In response to a question from Councillor Hardcastle, the Head of Legal Services explained that section 9.3.5 related to site visits and brief notes being made on any points raised.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Phillips and seconded by Councillor Bithell.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the alterations to the Planning Code of Practice as identified in tracked changes in the appendix be approved; and

- (b) That after the wording in section 8.1 'adjoining ward Member will be invited to attend', that the following wording be added 'when the application significantly affects the neighbouring Members ward'.

83. DECLARATION AND DISPOSAL OF LAND SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENTS

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report and explained that from time to time the Council would decide that it no longer required a piece of land, and would categorise it as "surplus to requirements". Such land was sold generating receipts that funded the capital programme.

It was important that the decision making for doing that included consultation with the relevant parties, especially where the property currently formed part of the education estate.

The process was not currently documented and it was proposed that a short process be included within the Constitution for clarity and transparency.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Phillips and seconded by Councillor Bithell.

Councillor Bithell asked who valued the land and the Chief Executive explained that it would depend on the piece of land and the most appropriate valuer would be used accordingly.

In response to a question from Councillor Tudor Jones, the Chief Executive said there had been occasions where an area of land for disposal was on a school site and in those instances disposal would be discussed with the school.

A discussion took place as to when ward Members became involved in land disposals. Members felt that it should be earlier in the process and Councillor Richard Jones moved an amendment of "that when a piece of land is declared surplus the local Member be informed".

Councillors Phillips and Bithell as mover and seconder of the recommendation accepted the proposed amendment which then formed part of the substantive motion.

In response to a comment from Councillor Roberts, the Chief Officer (Governance) explained that there were methods for accountability which could be reported through the Governance and Audit Committee annually on the value for which pieces of land had been sold.

In response to a question from Councillor Marion Bateman, the Chief Executive explained that current land for sale was on the Asset Register which was a public document.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed process for declaring and disposing of land that is surplus to requirements be included within the Constitution and that local Members be

informed when a piece of land has been declared surplus. The disposal values would report annually to Governance & Audit Committee on the value for which pieces of land had been sold.

84. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None were received.

85. QUESTIONS

None were received.

86. NOTICE OF MOTION

None were received.

87. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 p. m. and ended at 4.20 p.m.)

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Chairman